

# Army Grit: Field Marshal Viscount Slim's Key to Victory

A Monograph

by

Major Matthew J. Fontaine  
US Army



School of Advanced Military Studies  
United States Army Command and General Staff College  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

2017

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. <b>PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.</b>					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 25-05-2017		2. REPORT TYPE Monograph		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) JUN 2016 – MAY 2017	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Army Grit: Field Marshal Viscount Slim's Key to Victory				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) MAJ Matthew J. Fontaine				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) School of Advanced Military Studies, Advanced Military Studies Program				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT By driving the previously invincible Japanese out of Burma in 1945, the Fourteenth Army and its commander, Field Marshal Viscount William Slim, demonstrated that they had the right stuff. To cope with war's demands, military personnel have to know what it means to dig deep during self-study, training, and execution. Psychologist and MacArthur "genius grant" winner, Angela Duckworth argues that grit, which she defines as a combination of key qualities, is essential to exceptional achievement. Duckworth's research-backed grit construct sheds lights on why some succeed and others do not.  This monograph, using the historical case study method, reveals that Slim's personal attributes were highly correlated with Duckworth's construct and that he forged a gritty culture within the Fourteenth Army. This study first analyzes how Slim's grittiness grew to enable him to overcome near insurmountable personal and professional obstacles along his path to the mastery of the military art. It then traces the Allies' bitter defeat in 1942, Slim's implementation of a thoughtful morale-building and progressive training program within the Fourteenth Army, and the gritty team's actions that resulted in victory.  The results of this analysis demonstrate grit's relevance to the modern Army. The grit construct is a useful addendum to existing Army leadership doctrine. Its emphasis on nested goals, common understanding, and continuous communication make it a natural fit for the mission command philosophy. In the contemporary complex operating environment, grittier Soldiers and leaders are better suited to cope with, learn from, and overcome the challenges inherent to the nature of war. This study concludes with suggestions, culled from Duckworth's research, for how best to grow grit, not just in yourself, but within your organization as well.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Grit, Slim, Passion, Perseverance, Duckworth, Culture, Fourteenth Army, Resilience, Mission Command, Complex, Burma, Mastery, Paragon					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT (U)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 67	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON MAJ Matthew J. Fontaine
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)	c. THIS PAGE (U)			19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)

### Monograph Approval Page

Name of Candidate: Major Matthew J. Fontaine

Monograph Title: Army Grit: Field Marshal Viscount Slim's Key to Victory

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Monograph Director

George S. Lauer, PhD

\_\_\_\_\_, Seminar Leader

Joseph A. Schafer, COL

\_\_\_\_\_, Director, School of Advanced Military Studies

James C. Markert, COL

Accepted this 25<sup>th</sup> day of May 2017 by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Director, Graduate Degree Programs

Prisco R. Hernandez, PhD

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other government agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

Fair use determination or copyright permission has been obtained for the inclusion of pictures, maps, graphics, and any other works incorporated into this manuscript. A work of the United States Government is not subject to copyright, however further publication or sale of copyrighted images is not permissible.

## **Abstract**

Army Grit: Field Marshal Viscount Slim's Key to Victory, by MAJ Matthew J Fontaine, Army, 67.

By driving the previously invincible Japanese out of Burma in 1945, the Fourteenth Army and its commander, Field Marshal Viscount William Slim, demonstrated that they had the right stuff. To cope with war's demands, military personnel have to know what it means to dig deep during self-study, training, and execution. Psychologist and MacArthur "genius grant" winner, Angela Duckworth argues that grit, which she defines as a combination of key qualities, is essential to exceptional achievement. Duckworth's research-backed grit construct sheds lights on why some succeed and others do not.

This monograph, using the historical case study method, reveals that Slim's personal attributes were highly correlated with Duckworth's construct and that he forged a gritty culture within the Fourteenth Army. This study first analyzes how Slim's grittiness grew to enable him to overcome near insurmountable personal and professional obstacles along his path to the mastery of the military art. It then traces the Allies' bitter defeat in 1942, Slim's implementation of a thoughtful morale-building and progressive training program within the Fourteenth Army, and the gritty team's actions that resulted in victory.

The results of this analysis demonstrate grit's relevance to the modern Army. The grit construct is a useful addendum to existing Army leadership doctrine. Its emphasis on nested goals, common understanding, and continuous communication make it a natural fit for the mission command philosophy. In the contemporary complex operating environment, grittier Soldiers and leaders are better suited to cope with, learn from, and overcome the challenges inherent to the nature of war. This study concludes with suggestions, culled from Duckworth's research, for how best to grow grit, not just in yourself, but within your organization as well.

## Contents

Acknowledgement .....	v
Acronyms.....	vi
Illustrations .....	vii
Tables.....	vii
Section 1: Introduction .....	1
Grit Defined .....	3
The Four Psychological Assets of the Grit Paragon .....	6
Organizational Grit .....	9
Army Grit.....	12
Section 2: The Growth of a Grit Paragon .....	15
Part One: Nothing Foreordained.....	15
Part Two: The Great War.....	19
Section Three: On the Path to Mastery .....	24
Part One: A Lifetime of Preparation.....	24
Part Two: The Education of a Grit Paragon.....	27
Section Four: Forging a Culture of Grit .....	32
Part One: Defeat in Burma.....	32
Part Two: Forging a Culture of Grit .....	35
Part Three: Victory .....	38
Section Five: Conclusion.....	45
Part One: Grit, Slim, and the Fourteenth Army .....	45
Part Two: Slim – A Contemporary Grit Role Model.....	47
Appendix 1 .....	49
Appendix 2 .....	53
Appendix 3 .....	54
Bibliography .....	58

## Acknowledgement

Thanks go to monograph director, Dr. Steve Lauer and seminar leader, COL Joseph Schafer. Dr. Lauer provided invaluable guidance and discussion throughout the entire monograph process without being prescriptive. His input significantly improved the organization and flow of the entire argument. He and COL Schafer permitted the creative exploration of a topic that I found both professionally rewarding and personally interesting. Thanks also go to Bonnie Joranko, whose editing service found errors. Special thanks again go to my wife, Katrina. This is the second graduate project that Katrina has endured in less than two years. Katrina continued to offer endless encouragement, support, and editing throughout the entire process.

## Acronyms

OTC      Officers Training Corps

Burcorps      Burma Corps

## Illustrations

Figure 1. Goal Hierarchy.....	50
Figure 2. Grit Destroying Goal Hierarchies .....	51
Figure 3. Adaptability and Overcoming Setbacks.....	52

## Tables

Table 1. Common Grit Paragon Psychological Assets.....	9
Table 2. Culture of Grit.....	11
Table 3. The Grit Scale .....	53
Table 4. Grit In Comparison to Army Leadership Attributes .....	55



## Section 1: Introduction

In military, public, or administrative affairs, there is a need for deep thought as well as deep analysis, and also for an ability to concentrate on subjects for a long time without fatigue.

— Napoleon, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*

In 2011, the British people chose Field Marshal Viscount William Slim, along with the Duke of Wellington, as their all-time greatest military leaders.<sup>1</sup> From humble origins, Slim received his commission as a lieutenant at the start of the First World War, and was seriously wounded twice in action. In 1942, Slim took command of the First Burma Corps, then reeling as a result of a terrific Japanese onslaught.<sup>2</sup> Slim led his devastated forces in a retreat from Burma to India under abject conditions. Once in India, he overcame near insurmountable obstacles during his effort to rebuild the Fourteenth Army's fighting capability. In just two years, the Fourteenth Army drove the previously invincible Japanese out of Burma, bringing victory from defeat.<sup>3</sup>

What was Slim's secret of success? The answer to this question is important for the military professional. Nineteenth century, Prussian General Carl Von Clausewitz observed that "danger, physical exertion, intelligence, and friction" are the "elements that coalesce to form the atmosphere of war, and turn it into a medium that impedes activity."<sup>4</sup> The Army anticipates that uncertainty, complexity, and increasingly capable and elusive enemies will characterize the future operating

---

<sup>1</sup> National Army Museum, "Britain's Greatest General," 2017, accessed January 18, 2017, <http://www.nam.ac.uk/exhibitions/online-exhibitions/britains-greatest-general/how-vote>.

<sup>2</sup> Russell Miller, *Uncle Bill: The Authorised Biography of Field Marshal Viscount Slim* (Essex: Phoenix, 2014), 11-66, 159-163.

<sup>3</sup> David W. Hogan Jr. in William Slim, *Defeat into Victory: Battling Japan in Burma and India, 1942-1945* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), vii-xiv.

<sup>4</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and translated by Peter Paret and Michael Howard (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 122.

environment.<sup>5</sup> To cope with these challenges, Army personnel need to know what it means to dig deep to overcome obstacles and accomplish a range of missions.<sup>6</sup> Psychologist and MacArthur “genius grant” winner Angela Duckworth, in her work, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, argues that grit, the “combination of passion and perseverance,” is the key to exceptional achievement.<sup>7</sup>

In accomplishing his mission against incredible odds, Slim demonstrated that he had the “right stuff.”<sup>8</sup> Grit paragons are individuals “who epitomize the qualities of passion and perseverance.”<sup>9</sup> This monograph, using the historical case study method, reveals Slim’s personal attributes are highly correlated with those of the grit construct, and that the Fourteenth Army’s organizational grittiness was a factor that led to its final victory. In light of these findings, this study aims to demonstrate grit’s relevance to the contemporary Army. The criteria for the evaluation of Slim are the four psychological assets, noted by Duckworth, as most common to grit paragons: *interests, practice, purpose, hope*.<sup>10</sup>

This study contains five sections. This section presents Duckworth’s theory of grit so as to have a model with which to compare Slim and the Fourteenth Army. Section 2 examines Slim’s early life to demonstrate that he possessed and fostered Duckworth’s four psychological assets.

---

<sup>5</sup> United States Army, US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet (TP) 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army Operating Concept (AOC): Win in a Complex World* (Fort Eustis, VA: Department of the Army, 2014), i-vi.

<sup>6</sup> United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: USA MC CoE, 2015), accessed August 10, 2016, [http://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/publications/HDCDTF\\_White\\_Paper\\_%20Grit\\_FINAL\\_June\\_2015.pdf](http://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/publications/HDCDTF_White_Paper_%20Grit_FINAL_June_2015.pdf), 2.

<sup>7</sup> Angela Duckworth et al., *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* (New York: Scribner, 2016), 8.

<sup>8</sup> United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 90.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

Section 3 studies Slim's drive towards the mastery of the military art during the interwar period and his continued development as a grit paragon. Russell Miller's, *Uncle Bill: The Authorized Biography of Field Marshal Viscount Slim*, and Ronald Lewin's, *Slim: The Standardbearer*, are the primary sources for sections 2 and 3. Section 4 demonstrates that Slim created a "culture of grit," which positively influenced the Fourteenth's Army's organizational passion and perseverance.<sup>11</sup> It demonstrates that the Fourteenth Army's organizational grit was a factor in its victory over the Japanese. Slim's autobiography, *Defeat into Victory: Battling Burma and India, 1942-1945*, is the primary source for section 4. The fifth section summarizes the study and discusses the grit construct's implications for the contemporary Army.

## Grit Defined

Developed by Duckworth in 2007, grit is a personality trait that consists of two components: passion and perseverance. Passion is the "idea of *consistency over time* [italics original]."<sup>12</sup> It is an enduring devotion to achieving one's goal over a long period as opposed to short-term enthusiasm. Passion serves as a "compass" that guides a person where they want to be. Gritty people have their priorities in order, and avoid disorganized goal structures.<sup>13</sup>

Clearly defined and unified goal hierarchies are a key aspect of the grit construct.<sup>14</sup> A goal hierarchy that is "unified, aligned, and coordinated" ideally has one top-level goal with a host of supporting mid-level and low-level goals (see figure 1, appendix 1).<sup>15</sup> Gritty individuals do not

---

<sup>11</sup> Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 243-268.

<sup>12</sup> United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 2; and Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 56-57.

<sup>13</sup> Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 58-64.

<sup>14</sup> United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 13.

<sup>15</sup> Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*. 64-66.

indulge in what psychologist Gabriele Oettingen calls “positive fantasizing.”<sup>16</sup> Instead, gritty people make concrete plans to obtain their goals. Gritty people recognize that time and energy is finite, and competing goals distract you from the goals that matter (see figure 2, appendix 1). They ask themselves, “*To what extent do these goals serve a common purpose* [italics original].”<sup>17</sup> Perseverance is the quality that allows someone to overcome setbacks, complete a tough challenge, and to finish what they start.<sup>18</sup> Others liken the concept of perseverance to a mule: “It’s that determination and *strength* [emphasis original] to push through when it appears there’s very little hope.”<sup>19</sup> Crucially, gritty people adapt to overcome setbacks (see figure 3, appendix 1).<sup>20</sup> Author Paul Stoltz coined the term “dumb grit” to describe a gritty person that lacks adaptability. A person with dumb grit relentlessly pursues a goal that no longer has any value or repeatedly uses the same ineffective approach.<sup>21</sup>

Grit can be grown, and it is not necessarily correlated with talent. Grit’s focus is on effort rather than fixed intrinsic aptitudes. Sociologist Dan Chambliss observed, “Talent is perhaps the

---

<sup>16</sup> Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 65; and Gabrielle G. Oettingen, “Positive Fantasy and Motivation,” in *The Psychology of Action: Linking Cognition and Motivation to Behavior*, ed. P. M. Gollwitzer and J. A. Bargh (New York: Guilford, 1996), 238-239, accessed September 2, 2016, [http://psych.nyu.edu/oettingen/Oettingen,%20G.%20\(1996\).%20Positive%20fantasy%20and%20motivation.pdf](http://psych.nyu.edu/oettingen/Oettingen,%20G.%20(1996).%20Positive%20fantasy%20and%20motivation.pdf). Oettingen describes positive fantasizing as the visualization in the mind of fanciful and personally positive future events. It is a perilous form of thinking as it promotes “anticipatory consumption of success, experience of no need to act, and a lack of detailed action plans.” Positive fantasies let a person enjoy on some level today what they have not earned. This psychological effect can be ruinous to the level of motivation that is often necessary to take the difficult steps necessary to achieve that goal in reality.

<sup>17</sup> Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 9, 64-68.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Mike Thompson and Stephen Caldwell, *Forging Grit: A Story of Leadership Perseverance* (Boise: Elevate Publishing, 2016), 134.

<sup>20</sup> United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 14.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Stoltz, *Grit: The New Science of What It Takes to Persevere, Flourish, Succeed* (n.p.: Climb Strong Press, 2014), 49-50.

most pervasive lay explanation we have for athletic success.”<sup>22</sup> In contrast to talent, the grit construct posits “that a high level of performance is, in fact, an accretion of mundane facts,” in sports or any other endeavor.<sup>23</sup> Those who focus on one thing accomplish amazing feats. Talent determines the speed which a person can improve in skill while effort builds skill and “makes skill *productive* [emphasis original].”<sup>24</sup>

A distinctive strength of the grit construct is its basis in research. In multiple studies, grit stands out among other traits as the best predictor for why some are better able to complete tough challenges. In one study done at West Point, gritty cadets, as measured by the Grit Scale (appendix 2), were more likely to complete the demanding program known as Beast Barracks. The scale suffers as it relies on self-reporting and inaccurate responses that can skew a person’s assessed grittiness. Despite this limitation, a cadet’s grit score was a better predictor as to who would make it through Beast Barracks than West Point’s own Whole Candidate Score. The Whole Candidate Score was a better predictor for a student’s GPA, however. Duckworth, et al reasoned that Beast Barracks called upon other strengths than the more routine accomplishment of earning good grades. Beyond West Point, research has shown that grittier adults are more likely to stay in difficult jobs and earn advanced degrees. Grit is a simple research-backed construct that predicts success.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, xv, 23-27; and Dan Chambliss in Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 36-37. Chambliss is a sociologist.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-38.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-43.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, xv-14; United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 9-10. A respondent determines their grittiness using the scale by checking off one of five boxes per statement that are linked to responses ranging from “not at all like me” to “very much like me;” Angela Duckworth and Patrick D. Quinn, “Development and Validation of the Short Grit Scale (Grit-S),” *Journal of Personality Assessment* 91, no. 2: (2009): 174, accessed January 18, 2017, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00223890802634290>; Michael Matthews, *Head Strong: How Psychology is Revolutionizing War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 17. Michael D. Matthews, author and Professor of Engineering of Psychology at the United States Military Academy, defines the Whole Candidate Score as a composite score based on the following three domains: academic,

## The Four Psychological Assets of the Grit Paragon

According to Duckworth, Grit paragons have four psychological assets: *interests*, *practice*, *purpose*, and *hope* (table 1). The first step to becoming a mature grit paragon is cultivating an *interest* in an endeavor. People perform better if their work aligns with their personal *interests*. Unfortunately, few people foster their passion. Most instead seek novelty in new *interests*. In contrast, an expert gains satisfaction by uncovering nuances in their ever-deepening, stable *interest*. While the well-known imperative to follow your passion is not bad advice, knowing how to foster *interest* is critical to understanding grittiness. First, a person requires time to figure out what interests them. A life-long passion is not the result of an epiphany. Second, a person does not discover their *interest* through a process of introspection. Chance encounters with new experiences trigger *interest*. Third, subsequent encounters retrigger emerging *interests* so they take hold. During follow-on experiences, a person takes increasingly proactive measures to deepen their *interest*. Finally, people need a cast of encouraging supporters for their *interests* to flourish. Gritty people love what they do and believe that “*novelty is nuance* [italics original].”<sup>26</sup>

The second psychological asset grit paragons share is their capacity for daily *practice*, a form of perseverance. Gritty people *practice* their *interests* more often and more purposely. *Practice* is the focused, “challenge-exceeding-skill” activities that turn a novice into a master.<sup>27</sup> K. Anders Ericsson et al. labels these effortful, time consuming, and highly structured activities as “deliberate practice.” Malcolm Gladwell in *Outliers* popularized Ericsson’s work with his discussion on the “10,000-hour rule.” The 10,000-hour rule posits that achieving expertise requires

---

leadership, and physical. The academic domain includes factors such as grade point average and Scholastic Aptitude Test results. The leadership domain includes factors such as sport participation and clubs; and Duckworth et al., “Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long Term Goals,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 96, no. 2 (June 2007): 1087-1, accessed January 18, 2017, <https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckworth/images/Grit%20JPSP.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 91-105, 114.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 91, 117-118.

a critical minimum amount of practice.<sup>28</sup> Deliberate practice is difficult, which is a reason why almost no one does it. It requires full concentration and repetitive efforts towards a clearly defined stretch goal “until what was a struggle before is now fluent and flawless.”<sup>29</sup> Once a stretch goal is met, experts start the process all over again. Experts seek feedback, recognize that mistakes are opportunities for learning, and reflect to systematically identify and correct the gaps in their knowledge. Grit paragons improve by practicing and resisting the complacency that prevents most from becoming great at their *interests*.<sup>30</sup>

The third common psychological asset is *purpose*. *Purpose* is “the intention to contribute to the well-being of others.”<sup>31</sup> *Purpose* typically begins as self-oriented *interest*, which only later matures into an appreciation for how their *interests* could benefit society. Like most, gritty individuals seek pleasure, but are “*dramatically* [emphasis original] more motivated than others to seek a meaningful, other-oriented life.”<sup>32</sup> Gritty people tend to view their work as a calling rather than a job. Bill Damon asserts that a purposeful role model can cultivate a sense of purpose. That role model can be anybody in a person’s life, or even a historical figure, who demonstrates that people make a difference. *Purpose* “ripens passion” and sustains a grit paragon’s lifelong *interest*. Gritty people believe that their work really matters to themselves and to others.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> K. Anders Ericsson, Ralf T. Krampe, and Clemens Tesch-Römer, “The Role of Deliberate Practice in the Acquisition of Expert Performance,” *Psychological Review* 100, no. 3 (1993), 363, accessed January 17, 2017, <http://projects.ict.usc.edu/itw/gel/EricssonDeliberatePracticePR93.pdf>; Malcom Gladwell, *Outliers: The Story of Success* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2008), 35-68.

<sup>29</sup> Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 117-138; the quotation can be found on page 123.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-142.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 143-144, 147.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 149-167; Bill Damon in Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 162-167. Damon is a professor of psychology at Stanford Graduate School of Education; and Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 91.

The final common psychological asset is *hope*. Duckworth defines *hope* as “a rising-to-the-occasion kind of perseverance.”<sup>34</sup> *Hope* is the belief that one’s efforts can improve their future in contrast to simply wishing for a better tomorrow. People become hopeless when they believe they have no control over their suffering. The opposite of helplessness is what psychologist Marty Seligman calls “learned optimism.” Optimists seek specific causes of their suffering or setbacks while pessimists find negative occurrences as the result of causes outside of their control. Grit paragons are optimistic without resorting to positive fantasizing; they seek ways to improve their situation. They believe failure on the path to success is simply an indication that more effort is required rather than proof that they lack the talent to go any further. Duckworth describes this growth-oriented mindset as the belief that one’s capacity to learn is not fixed and can be trained if you have the opportunities and try hard. Grit paragons optimistically explain adversity, which fuels perseverance. This increases their likelihood of overcoming more difficult trials later on. Gritty people overcome doubt to keep going in tough times.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 91.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 92; Marty Seligman in Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 173. Seligman is a psychologist and author; and Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 92, 169-195.



Table 1. Common Grit Paragon Psychological Assets			
Interest	Practice	Purpose	Hope
-Love what they do -Deep interests -Novelty is nuance	-Does what it takes to improve -Deliberate practice -Seek mastery (10,000 hour rule) -Resist complacency	-Believe that work matters -See work as a calling -Understand the value of a purposeful role model	-Rise to the occasion -Learned optimism -Growth mindset

*Source:* Created by author; table adapted from Anders Ericsson, Ralf T. Krampe, and Clemens Tesch-Römer, “The Role of Deliberate Practice in the Acquisition of Expert Performance,” 363; Gladwell, *Outliers: The Story of Success* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2008), 35-68; Damon in Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 162-167; Seligman in Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 173; and Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 91-195.

## Organizational Grit

Grit paragons forge organizational grit by bringing forth *interest, practice, purpose*, and *hope* in their subordinates.<sup>36</sup> Organizational grit is “an organization’s passion and perseverance towards a goal.”<sup>37</sup> An organization’s culture powerfully shapes the behaviors of its members. Grit paragons develop a culture of grit in their organizations in several ways.<sup>38</sup>

First, grit paragons take advantage of “short-term conformity effects,” the desire to fit oneself to the standards and norms of the group, to create long-term changes in one’s identity.<sup>39</sup> Chambliss posits that if an organization has high standards, newcomers are likely to incorporate positive practices and *interests* into their habits.<sup>40</sup> According to Duckworth, the influence of culture combines with the “social multiplier effect” so that one gritty individual “enhances the grit of the

---

<sup>36</sup> Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 199.

<sup>37</sup> United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 244-245.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 245-247.

<sup>40</sup> Dan Chambliss in Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 246- 247.

others, which in turns inspires more grit in that person, and so on without end.”<sup>41</sup> When an individual internalizes one’s organization’s values, “*The way we do things around here and why* [emphasis original]” becomes “*The way I do things and why.*”<sup>42</sup> When that happens, short-term conformity effects become long-term changes in the person’s identity.<sup>43</sup>

Second, leaders continuously communicate gritty imperatives and carefully defined goals to their organization, which stress the need for passion and perseverance. Imperatives incorporate the core values that truly define what it means to be in the organization.<sup>44</sup>

Third, leaders use the “*developmental model*” not the “*attrition model* [emphasis original]” to build organizational grit. The attrition model harnesses fear and favors survivalists while the developmental model stresses the need for leaders to lead by example. Leaders set the conditions for success by developing programs, which present incremental challenges that cultivate motivation and encourage confidence. This is in contrast to attritional models where hazing or a task that are too far outside their current capabilities prematurely ends many people’s *interests*. Developmental models are not soft – they include competitive and aggressive practice. Competing is not always about “triumphing over others” but also about struggling together.<sup>45</sup> In gritty organizations, leaders and their subordinates strive as a team to accomplish their objectives.

---

<sup>41</sup> According to authors William T. Dickens and James R. Flynn, the social multiplier “posits that when something raises the average performance of society, that rise becomes a powerful cause in its own right, and raises the average performance further, and raises it further, until the original rise is greatly multiplied.” William T. Dickens, and James R. Flynn, “Heritability Estimates Versus Large Environmental Effects: The IQ Paradox Resolved,” *Psychological Review* 108, no. 2 (1 April 2001): 346-69, accessed 19 January 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/heritability-estimates-versus-large-environmental-effects-the-iq-paradox-resolved/>; and Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 263.

<sup>42</sup> Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 247.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 252-269.

<sup>45</sup> Lieutenant General Robert Caslen, in Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 259-260. General Caslen is West Point’s current superintendent; Duckworth, *Grit*:

Fourth, when failure happens, it is important to use it productively.<sup>46</sup> Gritty organizations own their success and failures, but get on with the matter of obtaining their ends. Gritty organizations are optimistic and show “passion and perseverance for long-term goals despite failure, setbacks, plateaus, *and* [emphasis original] turnover in leadership and membership.”<sup>47</sup> Leaders at all levels are aware as to how their actions contribute to the top-level goal.<sup>48</sup> Table 2 summarizes the ways to develop organizational grit.

Table 2. Culture of Grit				
Leverage Culture	Communication	Developmental	Failure a Tool	Nest Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use short-term conformity</li> <li>-Harness social multiplier</li> <li>-Create long-term identity changes</li> <li>-Explain the way things are done and why</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continuous</li> <li>-Stress passion and perseverance</li> <li>-Must contain core values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lead from the front</li> <li>-Strive together</li> <li>-Design incremental challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inculcate organizational optimism</li> <li>-Use failure productively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Define top-to-bottom goals</li> <li>-Hold leaders accountable for taking actions consistent with top-level goal</li> </ul>

*Source:* Created by author; table adapted from Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 243-268; Chambliss in Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 246- 247; Caslen, in Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 259-260; Gervais in Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 265; Carrol in Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 268; William T. Dickens and James R. Flynn, “Heritability Estimates Versus Large Environmental Effects: The IQ Paradox Resolved;” and United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 3, 11-15.

---

*The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 262; and Mike Gervais in *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 265. Gervais is a sports psychologist.

<sup>46</sup> Pete Carrol in Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 268; United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 11-12.

<sup>47</sup> United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 14-15.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

## Army Grit

Gritty individuals are more likely to succeed in adverse situations,<sup>49</sup> but, as a relatively new concept, doctrine does not explicitly discuss grit. Appendix 3 contrasts the definitions of grit related qualities and attributes from ADRP 6-22, *Army Leadership* and FM 6-22, *Leader Development*. The grit construct encompasses many Army leadership attributes, but no attribute captures grit in total. A way to think of grit is as an emergent property of a combination of essential attributes.

The grit construct includes noticeable parallels to the mission command principles. The grit construct's concept of organized goal hierarchies aligns with the creation of shared understanding and the need for a clear intent. Diverse members of an organization, unified toward the accomplishment of a common goal, create cohesive Army teams. Shared understanding permits leaders and Soldiers at all levels to collaborate on approaches to solving problems and resolve misunderstandings that could detract from achieving that goal. A clear commander's intent is the source of unity of effort within an organization. It nests within the higher intent so all know the actions that would best facilitate mission accomplishment in the absence of orders.<sup>50</sup> Successful mission command, therefore, incorporates the gritty principles of structured and unified goal structures so secondary distracting efforts do not wastefully disperse or dilute organizational energy.

When executing mission command, Soldiers trust that "their commanders are making proper decisions without unnecessary risk; and commanders must trust that their subordinates have

---

<sup>49</sup> Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 3-13.

<sup>50</sup> United States Army, ADRP 6-0, *Mission Command* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 2-1-2-3. The six principles of mission command are: build cohesive teams through mutual trust; create shared understanding; provide a clear commander's intent; exercise disciplined initiative; use mission orders; accept prudent risk; and United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 15.

aligned their superordinate goal, and Grit, with the mission.”<sup>51</sup> Organizational passion is analogous to morale, which is heightened as a result of striving together towards a common goal directed by the commander’s intent. Mission command makes intuitive sense to a gritty Soldier – they understand that to thrive in war’s unforgiving atmosphere, an organization requires direction and morale sustained by perseverance.

The value of morale in military operations has long been recognized. Napoleon believed that “moral force, rather than numbers, decides victory.”<sup>52</sup> Napoleon sought to develop two qualities in his subordinates: “If courage is the first characteristic of the soldier, perseverance is the second.”<sup>53</sup> Napoleon believed, “You must speak to the soul in order to electrify the man,” and incentives, like money, are not enough for a person to make the ultimate sacrifice in service of the common goal.<sup>54</sup> Passion is the wellspring of morale.

As in the past, moral forces and perseverance affect military operations. Operational reach is the equalization of the “natural tension between endurance, momentum, and protection.”<sup>55</sup> Momentum is the result of the execution of high-tempo operations that overpower the enemy. Perseverance, as a principle of joint operations, ensures the “commitment necessary to attain the national strategic end state.”<sup>56</sup> Units capable of persevering in austere conditions will be less likely to culminate before the completion of the mission. The culminating point is “that point in time and space at which a force no longer possesses the capability to continue its current form of

---

<sup>51</sup> United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 15.

<sup>52</sup> General G. Gourgaud, *Journal*, (Paris: 1899), Vol. II, 293, in Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 155.

<sup>53</sup> *Correspondance*, Vol. VI, No. 4855, 323 in Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 155.

<sup>54</sup> A. Lévy, *The Private Life of Napoleon* (London: 1894), Vol. II, 293. in Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 155.

<sup>55</sup> United States Army, ADRP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 4-5.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-2.

operations.”<sup>57</sup> In war, passion or morale is the intangible force that propels an organization forward in spite of danger, difficulty, and crushing tempo. Grit extends a unit’s culmination point even in the face of determined enemy resistance. Clausewitz likened war to “nothing but a duel on a grand scale.”<sup>58</sup> In the supreme contest of wills that is war, gritty armies outlast their opponents.

Slim did not beat the Japanese in 1945, the Fourteenth Army did. Slim’s gritty leadership was, however, a decisive factor in the transformation of the Fourteenth Army from a defeated force to an organization that overcame all obstacles to achieve victory. Section 2 examines Slim’s beginnings and his first steps towards becoming one of history’s greatest grit paragons.

---

<sup>57</sup> United States Army, ADRP 3-0, 4-8.

<sup>58</sup> Von Clausewitz, *On War*, 75.

## Section 2: The Growth of a Grit Paragon

This section examines Slim's early life through his experiences in World War I to demonstrate he possessed and fostered the four common psychological assets of the grit paragon. Part 1 examines Slim's birth to the start of the war to demonstrate how his *interest* in military affairs was engendered and grew. Part 2 documents Slim's commissioning and his first war experiences to show his growing *purpose* to the lives of his subordinates and desire for combat duty. Throughout, Slim's *hope* is a factor that made his dream of a military career a reality.

### Part One: Nothing Foreordained

Slim's *interest* in soldiering grew over time and as a result of happenstance events. Slim's entry in the armed forces was never a certainty and was, for several reasons, unlikely. He was born in Britain in 1891. Slim was the product of a rising, lower-middle class family. His father, John, and mother, Charlotte, a devout Catholic, raised Slim and his older brother, Charles, according to the tenants of the Catholic faith. At the age of five, Slim enrolled in a school that aimed to develop a local Catholic laity. Indeed, many of the school's pupils eventually entered the priesthood, which Miller speculates may have been what Charlotte had in mind for Slim. Even with his pious upbringing, a deep affection for organized religion never took hold.<sup>59</sup>

Slim's initial *interest* in military affairs amounted to playing simple war games with Charles. The Slim family had no tradition of military service.<sup>60</sup> Later, Slim remarked, "The Army was completely outside our contacts and interests."<sup>61</sup> He remembered having little interaction with soldiers, and never met an officer. Furthermore, Slim believed his parents would be horrified if he

---

<sup>59</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 11-14.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>61</sup> Slim, *Unpublished Memoir* in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 14.

enlisted, and knew that he lacked the social status as well as the substantial private income then necessary to obtain a commission.<sup>62</sup>

Despite these obstacles, Slim's *interest* in military affairs deepened because of interactions with his family. In the evening, John read aloud from a regularly published work entitled *British Battles on Land and Sea*. Slim recalled scrutinizing each work and pouring over the pictures. Slim began to daydream about one day becoming a soldier.<sup>63</sup> Charles further spurred Slim's *interest* by recounting the story of a popular British hero, Cloudesly Shovell. In the story, Shovell rose from the lowest rank to admiral, a path not so unlike the one that Slim, himself, would one day follow.<sup>64</sup> His father read aloud from the newspaper so often about the 1896 Sudan campaign that Slim thought "Kitchener" was the brand of the family's cooking range.<sup>65</sup> When the Boer War broke out in 1899, the Slim family anxiously followed the reports. Slim demonstrated his growing enthusiasm by collecting cards with photographs of British generals and attaching them to his jacket. By the time Slim enrolled at St. Phillip's Roman Catholic School in 1904, his *interest* in the military was irrevocably fired.<sup>66</sup>

At St. Phillip's, Slim took more proactive steps to develop military *interests*. Slim had no natural talent for schoolwork, never scoring far from average. Nor did Slim excel at sports. Slim did discover that he had a penchant for public speaking, which he would later utilize to great effect. Slim took to studying diagrams of historic battlefields, and imagining how he might have fought them differently. He remarked to his life-long friend and pupil, Philip Prat that he dreamed of leading men into battle, and often wished of being at the famous campaigns. Prat recalled that

---

<sup>62</sup> Slim, *Unpublished Memoir* in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 14-15.

<sup>63</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 15-16; and Slim, *Unpublished memoir* in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 16.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>65</sup> Lewin, *Slim The Standard Bearer* (United Kingdom: Wordsworth Editions, 1999), 2.

<sup>66</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 19.



Slim's "youthful ambition" was to "command a body of mercenaries."<sup>67</sup> At age sixteen, Slim was surprised to learn that he had won a scholarship to King Edward's School, one of the country's finest. It was there that Slim got his first taste of military life.<sup>68</sup>

At King Edwards, Slim's goal hierarchy took greater form, but remained conflicted. He immediately joined the school's Officers Training Corps (OTC) program. The nation organized OTCs after critical officer shortages in the Boer War demonstrated the necessity to expand military leadership training. Slim reveled in the experience. He treasured the advice of senior NCOs, never forgetting one particular comment: "There's only one principle of war and that's this: hit the other fellow as quick as you can and as hard as you can, where it hurts him the most and when he ain't lookin'!"<sup>69</sup> Academically, Slim maintained a lack luster record, though some faculty members cited his clear thinking and writing. Pratt believed it was at this time that Slim considered a teaching career. In 1907, his father's business collapsed. Unable to make a military career a reality, Slim took a teaching position at Steward Street School, one of the area's poorest, to contribute to his family's financial needs.<sup>70</sup>

Slim's sense of greater *purpose* first developed as a teacher. Slim was shocked at the condition of his students. Life was miserable in the slums surrounding the school. Slim dared not "lean too closely over them for fear of enterprising fleas seeking fresh pastures."<sup>71</sup> In the two years spent teaching, Slim worried about his students' basic needs, but also gained respect for their hardiness, honesty, and loyalty. Slim learned that empathy and understanding allowed him to keep

---

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 10-20; and Lewin, *Slim*, 6. Phillip Pratt, in a letter to Ronald Lewin, 20 August 1975.

<sup>68</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 20.

<sup>69</sup> Lewin, *Slim*, 8; Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 21, 27; and William Slim, *Defeat Into Victory: Battling Japan in Burma and India, 1942-1945* (New York: First Cooper Square Press, 2000), 551

<sup>70</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 21; Lewin, *Slim*, 8; and Slim, *Unpublished memoirs* in Lewin, *Slim*, 8.

<sup>71</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 22; and Slim, *Unpublished memoirs* in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 23.

some control over his sometimes riotous classroom. For Slim, the students served as grit role models who taught him the depths of strength that individuals could access even in the face of abuse, crime, and poverty. His *practice* in understanding ordinary people later contributed to his ability to build rapport with his soldiers in a way that more privileged officers could not.<sup>72</sup>

Notwithstanding learning valuable lessons, Slim's teaching time convinced him that he did not want an educator's life. He left and became a clerk at Stewart and Lloyds, a tube steel manufacturer. As with his former students, Slim admired the steelworkers' stoicism and solidarity they shared with their friends.<sup>73</sup> Slim's nagging desire to someday become an officer remained and his *hope* led him to further pursue this goal.

While a clerk, Slim joined the Birmingham University OTC and was an enthusiastic recruit. Slim practiced rifle drill, attended every parade, and all weekend and annual training. His "favorite reading now became *Field Service* and *Musketry Regulations*," and a coworker remembered that Slim was "never without his little book of military tactics and exercise."<sup>74</sup> Slim's part-time military career was not without setback. He lost a stripe during a twenty mile march after accepting beer from a lady observing the march. His commander witnessed his breach of discipline and told Slim that he would have been shot, had it occurred during wartime. This setback did not deter Slim for long, and he soon recovered his stripe.<sup>75</sup>

Slim still entertained the thought of becoming an officer, but difficult obstacles persisted. John remained opposed to the idea. His wish for Slim was to become an "English Gentlemen," a man "who pays up, owns up, and shuts up," and urged him to seek a livelihood in commerce.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 22-24.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-27.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-26; and Ronald Lewin 3/6, CAC in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 25.

<sup>75</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 26.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29.

While Slim believed it was possible to overcome his father's resistance, he knew the expense to attend the Sandhurst Royal Military College and the requisite private income were far outside his reach. Seeking greater adventure, Slim sought new employment.<sup>77</sup> It would not be necessary. The year was 1914, and world events intervened on his behalf.

## Part Two: The Great War

On 28 June 1914, Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated. Feeling that war with Germany was inevitable, Slim amazingly spent a two-week vacation visiting Germany to learn about his foe. Though not a German speaker, and this being his first trip abroad, Slim observed the German armed forces activity, and even went so far as to enter a barracks before an irate NCO caused him to leave. Upon returning home, Slim found orders to report to his OTC unit. On 4 August, Britain declared war on Germany. Just weeks later, Slim reached what had been an unobtainable goal, a commission as a temporary second lieutenant. It was during this time that Slim's top-level goal and *purpose* emerged – a good officer, capable of self-sacrifice in service to the King, country, and the men under his command.<sup>78</sup>

At age twenty-three, Slim was an Army novice, with no war experience. He immediately faced difficult challenges. Slim made a bad, first impression with his commander, who thereafter referred to him as that “damned fool Slim,” by failing to return a proper salute to a passing soldier.

---

<sup>77</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 28-29.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 30-32; Lewin, *Slim*, 12; and Michael Hickey, *The Unforgettable Army: Slim's XIVth Army in Burma* (Ware: UK: Spellmount LTD, 1992), 67. Slim's top-level goal and purpose was derived from an address delivered to Sandhurst, and quoted in Hickey's work, while service as Chief of the Imperial Staff, years after the allied defeat in Burma. Slim said “If you have the qualities of courage, initiative, will-power and knowledge you will be a leader, but you won't necessarily be a good leader or a leader for good. And you won't have that grip you must have on your men when things go wrong...then you will want one other quality, and unless you have got it you will not be a leader. That quality is self-sacrifice...that you will put the honour and interest of your King and Country, that next you put the safety, the well-being and the security of the men under your command, and that last, and last all the time, you will put your own interest, your own safety, and your own comfort. Then you will be a good officer.”

His first platoon was a ragtag group of men of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. The men were from heavy industries, not unlike the tough workers that Slim had grown to respect during his time as a clerk. One of the first things the platoon did was to barricade the door to their barracks over perceived pay issues. Slim disarmed their anger without further incident, using his capacity for sympathy and understanding. Over the course of some months, Slim overcame these setbacks and built a cohesive team.<sup>79</sup>

On 13 July 1916, the Royal Warwickshire Regiment landed in Gallipoli. It was in the heat and danger of that barren land that Slim's *purpose*, an unflagging devotion to the welfare and fighting capability of the common soldier, took form. Once during a short reprieve from the front, Slim's platoon took comfort under the single patch of shade available on a whole stretch of shore. Slim stayed alert and observed that, then distant, incoming Turkish artillery fire was falling in a pattern that would soon endanger the platoon. Slim ordered the platoon to move to a safe location in the sun, but so exhausted were his men, that they nearly mutinied when forced to move. Nor did they grow less angry when another platoon took their shady spot and fell asleep almost immediately. No appeals by Slim had any effect on moving the newly arrived men.<sup>80</sup> Soon another shell "arrived and a number of that unlucky platoon never woke again."<sup>81</sup> The incident cemented Slim's reputation as an excellent officer. The men never complained about being in the sun again.<sup>82</sup>

In another incident, Slim went to the troopship *SS Aragon*, then an HQ node located off the coast, to pick up the unit's mail and gain authority to buy food to supplement his men's rations. Slim was disgusted with the contrast between the lives of the staff officers, then served gin and ice,

---

<sup>79</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 34-37; and Lewin, *Slim*, 16.

<sup>80</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 39-41; and Lieutenant Colonel A. J. Barker, "British Bulldog," in *Slim*, ed. Michael Calvert and Barrie Pitt (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), 7.

<sup>81</sup> Phillip Pratt, "Care for His Men," *British Army Annual*, No. 2, 1955 in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 41.

<sup>82</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 40-41.

onboard the ship and the plight of his own soldiers, who “eked out an existence in the shallow trenches.”<sup>83</sup> Slim recollected that he “got the impression that visitors from the fighting troops, especially those who interfered with the pleasant tenor of staff life, were not really welcome.”<sup>84</sup> Later in his career, staff officers serving under Slim had no doubt that their main purpose was to work for the fighting men.<sup>85</sup>

On 9 August 1915, Slim’s company participated in an ill-fated attack on a Turkish position at Sari Bair Ridge. During the intense fighting, Slim and the Warwicks found themselves fighting alongside the men of the Gurkha Rifles, the battalion that, unbeknownst to him, he joined in the interwar period.<sup>86</sup> According to Geoffrey Evans, Slim was at once “full of admiration for their courage and cheerfulness under the worst conditions.”<sup>87</sup> While leading his men under fire, a bullet went through his chest, just missing his heart.<sup>88</sup>

Slim was evacuated to Britain and remained close to death for some time. Medical staff told Slim that his military career was finished, and recommended a surgery that would fuse his upper arm and shoulder. The surgery would almost certainly result in a medical discharge. Slim refused, and instead began the slow process of recovery to keep the possibility of further service alive. The gamble paid off; Slim was permitted to stay on active duty, though designated as being permanently disabled. During his convalescence, Slim contended with the last obstacle preventing him from a military career, his lack of means. To overcome this, Slim applied and was allocated a commission in the West India Regiment, a unit where one could live on one’s own pay. Though he

---

<sup>83</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 41; Lewin, *Slim*, 21; and Geoffrey Evans, *Slim as Military Commander* (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc, 1969), 21.

<sup>84</sup> Slim, *Unpublished Memoir*, in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 42.

<sup>85</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 42.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 42; and Geoffrey Evans, *Slim as Military Commander*, 21.

<sup>87</sup> Evans, *Slim as Military Commander*, 21.

<sup>88</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 43.

would never join the regiment, Slim's permanent commission marked the achievement of a goal that had seemed impossible.<sup>89</sup>

Assigned to light duty to a holding battalion in Britain, Slim did everything he could to get back to the troops. He communicated to Pratt in February 1916, "The prospect of stopping here for the duration of the War fills me with gloom."<sup>90</sup> Slim volunteered to accompany replacement soldiers destined for the 9th Warwicks, his old unit, which was then in Mesopotamia. The army expected Slim to return to Britain after depositing the troops, but never did. Slim took command of his old company, which had just spent eight months in a failed attempt to relieve a British garrison at Kut.<sup>91</sup> Many years later, his son John recalled that his father never divulged how he got back to his old battalion, but "it was pretty obvious he disobeyed every rule and command just to get there."<sup>92</sup>

In Mesopotamia, Slim continued to develop as a grit paragon. He learned important lessons from his commander, General Stanley Maude who revitalized his demoralized forces by significant reorganizing and resupplying efforts. The unit's eventual march on Baghdad gave Slim opportunities to *practice* the art of war. Slim's receipt of the Military Cross for a bold outflanking movement on a Turkish position, which resulted in a near bloodless acquisition of key terrain overlooking the Euphrates, evidenced his growing military acumen. While many despair in war, Slim's passion for soldiering left him, according to Miller, "still captivated by the romance of exotic, faraway countries."<sup>93</sup>

---

<sup>89</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 46-50; Lewin, *Slim*, 26; John Slim in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 48. John Slim is William Slim's son; and Colonel R. E. Barnwell in Evans, *Slim as Military Commander*, 22.

<sup>90</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 48-49; and Slim 6/8, CAC in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 49.

<sup>91</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 53-54.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 53; and John Slim in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 53.

<sup>93</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 55-59. The quotation can be found on page 59.

Slim participated in and questioned the aptness of frontal assaults that resulted in little gain, but great loss. On 28 March 1917, Slim had a premonition of death prior to what was later called, “the affair of Duqma.” Slim felt the plan was a poor one, and that he would somehow have to pay for it. The next morning, during a “blinkered” frontal assault against Turkish trenches, a shell fragment severely wounded Slim’s arm. Slim kept with the charge and captured a Turkish position. Later, Slim was critical of the division’s plan, which cost over a third of the battalion, thinking that it would have been better to outflank the trenches. Slim went to India to convalesce. Though nothing could have pleased him less, Slim spent the remainder of the war as a staff officer.<sup>94</sup>

When the war ended in 1918, Slim reflected on the millions of lives lost in ineffective frontal assaults. The lessons learned in World War I forever informed his *purpose* and leadership philosophy.<sup>95</sup> His dedication to the welfare of his troops served as a compass for the rest of his time in the military. The next section examines Slim’s experiences during the interwar period to demonstrate his continued self-development as a grit paragon and his first efforts to create a culture of grit.

---

<sup>94</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 58; Lewin, *Slim*, 32; Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 64; Slim in *Unpublished memoir*, in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 66-67; Lewin, *Slim*, 33-34; and Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 71.

<sup>95</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 71.

## Section Three: On the Path to Mastery

This section examines Slim's life during the interwar period through his experiences as a Corps Commander in World War II. It demonstrates Slim's unrelenting drive towards the mastery of the military art and his continued development of Duckworth's four psychological assets of the grit paragon. This section demonstrates that Slim sought to develop a culture of grit within his organizations. Part 1 reviews Slim's experiences in the interwar period to highlight his *practice* habits that prepared his future challenges. Part two studies Slim's actions at the start of World War II in the Sudan, Eritrea, and Persia to show the solidification of his life's *purpose* and his dogged *hope* that bold actions and perseverance inevitably lead to victory.

### Part One: A Lifetime of Preparation

In 1920, Slim took command of A Company, 6th Gurkha Rifles, in Abbottabad, in current-day Pakistan. Slim's observation of them in action at Sari Bari Ridge during World War I established respect for the Gurkhas' resolute courage in extreme danger in his mind. The Gurkhas followed set procedures for everything, which, if they were to be trusted, newly arrived officers had to rapidly learn.<sup>96</sup>

Slim overcame many challenges while in command and fostered the psychological asset of *practice*. The first challenge was the "language question." His men refused to follow orders delivered in English or in poor Gurkhali, the Gurkha's native tongue. In short order, Slim practiced and mastered both Gurkhali and Urdu. His next challenge was to reduce the threat from border tribes along the North-West Frontier. Frontier service was arduous. Slim dealt with fast-changing situations while isolated, and made do with scant resources – *practice* for future, similar situations.<sup>97</sup>

---

<sup>96</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 42-44, 76-77.

<sup>97</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 77-81.



In 1921, Slim became the 1st-6th Gurkha adjutant.<sup>98</sup> While many postwar officers struggled to adapt to peacetime, Slim never became complacent. The adjutant position required one able to train new personnel and maintain the bearing of the unit.<sup>99</sup> Herbert Gibbs, the Quartermaster, recalled that Slim “worked like hell,” but had “plenty of time for fun.”<sup>100</sup> Another officer, J. B. Scott, observed that Slim “was a perfectionist – under his eye the guardmounting and bugles very quickly became as good as they had ever been; he spoke the language well, knew the men intimately and they in turn had respect and affection for him.”<sup>101</sup> By setting an example, Slim positively influenced the Gurkha’s organizational culture. His *purpose*, being a “good officer,” kept him on track where others faltered, and enabled the steady accretion of skill, which was now being widely recognized.

Slim’s path to mastery accelerated in 1922 with the arrival of the new Gurkha commander, Lieutenant Colonel Glynton. Glynton encouraged his officers to compete for a place at the Indian Army Staff College at Quetta. To increase their likelihood of being accepted, Glynton assigned practice papers, held professional discussions, and graded their efforts. Slim’s *interest* in military affairs beyond the small unit level was triggered as a result of Glynton’s mentorship. Slim dedicated himself to study and writing in preparation for examinations.<sup>102</sup> Slim’s *practice* paid off when the accepted list arrived; his name was at the top.<sup>103</sup>

Slim’s *practice*, *purpose*, and *hope* was fostered and tested during the remaining interwar years. In 1926, Slim married Aileen Robertson. At Quetta, and now with a family in tow, Slim knuckled down on his studies and gained a reputation of an independent thinker. Sidelined from

---

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>99</sup> Evans, *Slim as Military Commander*, 24.

<sup>100</sup> Herbert Gibbs in Ronald Lewin 3/6, CAC in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 87.

<sup>101</sup> J.B. Scott in Evans, *Slim as Military Commander*, 24.

<sup>102</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 90; and Lewin, *Slim*, 46.

<sup>103</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 100.

many sports as a result of his war injuries, Slim was a vocal critic of the idea that hunting and polo was a suitable character builder for young officers.<sup>104</sup> For Slim, whose priorities aligned towards his military success and family, hunting must have seemed like a competing goal and a distraction.

After earning an “A” grade in Quetta, Slim went to Army Headquarters, Delhi. To support his growing family and address the financial problems that plagued his life, Slim wrote fiction under a penname. Writing augmented his pay without risking his top-level military career goal. It served as *practice* for his ability to grip the attention of an audience and to express his thoughts clearly, skills which later served him well.<sup>105</sup> In a letter to Pratt in 1932, Slim wrote, “Financially things are rather grim.”<sup>106</sup> Instead of becoming hopeless, Slim toiled into the night to produce works that paid his son’s school fees.<sup>107</sup> On the staff, Slim’s concern for the troops was never far from his mind. Phil Vickers a coworker, remembered long conversations with Slim about how to improve the situation for the often isolated troops in the North-West Frontier which spurred unit-wide discussions on aerial supply.<sup>108</sup>

After his General Staff stint, Slim was briefly assigned as the second command of the 1st-6th Gurkhas in 1933. In less than a year, Slim took the post as the Indian Army representative at the Staff College in Surrey. Slim’s *hope* was tested during this period. At the age of forty-three, Slim feared he was getting too old for further promotion despite regularly earning outstanding evaluations. Notwithstanding his growing pessimism, Slim’s work performance kept the possibility of advancement alive.<sup>109</sup> As an instructor, Slim fired the *interests* and *passions* of his students. One

---

<sup>104</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 96, 100-103.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 104-107; and Lewin, *Slim*, 52. Slim’s penname was Anthony Mills.

<sup>106</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 109.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 106; and Ronald Lewin, *Slim*, 54.

<sup>109</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 110-112.

student remarked, “I don’t think I could have learned more from anybody.”<sup>110</sup> Another recollected that Slim “was a chap we all looked up to immensely... Bill was one of the two or three [instructors] with whom we should like to go to war.”<sup>111</sup> At the end of his first year, the Commandant felt Slim was “one of the best instructors that he had.”<sup>112</sup>

After his instructional period, Slim took a one-year course at the Imperial Defense College, where students learned to hone their analytical skills and strategic mindset. Slim continued to worry that his fate was to be a permanent staff officer, and that his goals of command would not be achieved. Finally, after nearly being put on the retirement list, Slim was promoted to lieutenant colonel and given command of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Gurkhas.<sup>113</sup>

Slim’s time with the 7th Gurkhas was short. As before, European events greatly affected his life. With the rise of Nazi Germany, the army promoted Slim to the rank of brigadier, and assigned him duty as the Commandant at the Senior Officers School. On 3 September 1939, just days after the German invasion of Poland, England declared war on Germany.<sup>114</sup> The war provided Slim an opportunity to demonstrate what decades of effort directed towards the mastery of a single goal could accomplish.

## Part Two: The Education of a Grit Paragon

With war declared, Slim had no intention of sitting out the war as a school Commandant.<sup>115</sup> Slim’s top-level goal and his *purpose* had always included the command of troops, especially during wartime, and he rushed to Indian Army Headquarters. Slim’s perseverance paid off; just two

---

<sup>110</sup> Major-General Sir Charles Dunphie, CB, CBE, DSO in Lewin, 58.

<sup>111</sup> Major-General Nigel Duncan, CB, CHE, DSO in Lewin, 58-59.

<sup>112</sup> SLIM 2/1, CAC in Miller, 113.

<sup>113</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 113; Major Gen. Davies, SLIM 5/4, CAC in Russel Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 114; and Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 114-115.

<sup>114</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 116-117.

<sup>115</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 118.

weeks after arriving, he took command of 10th Indian Infantry Brigade destined for service in the Middle East.<sup>116</sup>

Slim's command faced many obstacles, which he overcame with his *hope* and *purpose*. The Indian Army's experience was in service on the North-West Frontier, and it was ill prepared and equipped for modern maneuver warfare. Furthermore, the government prioritized the British Army in France, as the government determined that the Indian Army would not be involved in "first-class war."<sup>117</sup>

Where some would become hopeless, Slim became resourceful, and in the process inculcated a culture of grit. He set about ensuring that his top-level goal for the brigade, a cohesive team able to handle whatever challenges lay ahead, was achieved. First, Slim instructed his men to train on the available horse transport, and to treat them as if they were motor vehicles. He scrounged old trucks, and hired local instructors to teach his men how to drive. Then he "welded the brigade into a happy and enthusiastic team" through an imaginative training program that was "very much to the point."<sup>118</sup> There was no competing grit destroying goal hierarchies in 10th Indian Brigade.

In August 1940, the 10th Indian Division deployed to Sudan to check Italian activity as part of the greater East African Campaign to liberate Ethiopia. Slim's brigade participated in what was the first British land offensive of World War II, an attack on two Italian defensive positions in Gallabat and Metemma. In the action, Slim demonstrated his sense of *purpose* by taking measures to safeguard the lives of his men. Slim ensured the troops camouflaged the tanks and he creatively masked the sound of their engines through the use of low-flying aircraft. To increase the likelihood

---

<sup>116</sup> Lewin, *Slim*, 63; and Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 118.

<sup>117</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 119; and Brett-James, *Ball of Fire*, in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 119.

<sup>118</sup> Lewin, *Slim*, 63; Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 119; and Gen. H.G. "Taffy" Davies in Evans, op. cit. in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 119.

of success against the formidable Italian defense, Slim's plan called for a bombardment followed by a tank attack with infantry in support.<sup>119</sup> Slim aimed to avoid unimaginative and costly frontal attacks. In the evening prior to the attack, Slim recalled that "while like other mortals we could not command success, we had done all we could to deserve it."<sup>120</sup>

The Gallabat operation was a failure. From the start, unanticipated mine fields hampered the tempo of the attack. A well-coordinated Italian air counterattack wrought terrible carnage on the troops as they secured one of the Italian fortifications, spreading such panic that soldiers of the 1st Essex, a British battalion sent to "'stiffen' the native troops," fled. Throughout the two-day action, even when it appeared hopeless, Slim thought of ways to maintain control of Gallabat and seize Metemma. He considered an attack on Metemma, but after convening with his senior officers, determined that the men could not stand up to further bombing. Unwilling to further erode morale, Slim withdrew his forces from Gallabat.<sup>121</sup>

Slim took a hard look at his failure in Ethiopia. Ten days after the withdrawal, Slim learned from intercepted Italian signals that had he attacked, Metemma would likely have fallen.<sup>122</sup> Slim did not blame any external forces or chance factors; instead he reasoned optimistically that, "Like so many generals whose plans have gone wrong, I could find plenty of excuses for failure, but only one *reason* [italics original] – myself."<sup>123</sup> He concluded that he had "taken counsel of my fears" and

---

<sup>119</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 120-123.

<sup>120</sup> Slim, *Unofficial History* (New York: David McKay, 1959), 130.

<sup>121</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 121-132. Miller notes that the decision to replace one of Slim's Indian battalions with a British one was an outdated custom stemming from the Mutiny. The Mutiny was an unsuccessful rebellion begun by native troops against British rule in India from 1857-1858. The Mutiny resulted in an extensive reorganization of the Indian Army. The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "Indian Mutiny," Encyclopedia Britannica, 5 September 2014, accessed 20 January 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Indian-Mutiny>.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>123</sup> Slim, *Unofficial History*, 148.

in the future, he would select the bolder course of action.<sup>124</sup> Slim's *hope* meant that he saw his failure not as evidence of a lack of talent, but that more effort would be required in the future.

In January 1941, the 10th Indian Brigade took part in a major allied offensive against the Italians in East Africa. Making good on his resolution to improve, Slim's brigade cut off the retreat of an Italian brigade, and captured its commander. Slim's brigade command came abruptly to an end when, while traveling in an armored car, Italian fighter aircraft strafed his vehicle. Slim was struck in the backside, a most embarrassing wound, which required convalescence in India. Slim returned to duty as the Director of Operations and Intelligence at army headquarters in India, and as usual, sought an active command. In May 1941, now a temporary major general, Slim took command of 10th Indian Division.<sup>125</sup>

Slim's division was ordered into Syria to prevent Axis forces from gaining staging grounds in the Middle East.<sup>126</sup> Slim trusted the fighting spirit and technical competence of his troops, but aimed to prepare them "practically and above all mentally, for the heavier fighting that we must soon meet."<sup>127</sup> John Masters, a battalion adjutant recalled Slim saying in a speech that discipline held a soldier in place during combat for only a time, what made "him go on, alone, determined to break the will of the enemy opposite him, is morale."<sup>128</sup> Slim's message to his officers emphasized the core values of passion and perseverance. Slim's speech began the process of creating a culture of organizational grit. After, Masters reflected that he "went back to our camp in a thoughtful mood. Slim's sort of a battle wouldn't be much of a lark after all."<sup>129</sup>

---

<sup>124</sup> Slim, *Unofficial History*, 148.

<sup>125</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 133-137; and Lewin, *Slim*, 68-70.

<sup>126</sup> Robert Lyman, *Bill Slim* (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2011), 12-13.

<sup>127</sup> John Masters, *The Road Past Mandalay* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), 36.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-37.

<sup>129</sup> Masters, *The Road Past Mandalay*, 36-37.

Slim no longer wavered in selecting “bold” actions. In an attack on French Vichy forces at Deir-e-Zoir, Syria, limited fuel seemed to constrain Slim to just one option, a conventional frontal assault on a defended approach. In keeping with his *purpose*, Slim ordered a flanking maneuver to catch the enemy off balance, accepting the risk that a lack of fuel reserves meant that if the attack failed, it marooned the flank column. This was not simply positive fantasizing; Slim ensured “that every drop of petrol” be brought up, even if it meant that vehicles in the rear would be made immobile in order to extend the culmination point of his division.<sup>130</sup> Though “fear and doubt began to creep in on me,” Slim remembered Gallabat and determined to “listen to my hopes rather than to my fears.”<sup>131</sup> The attack was a success. The battle was a significant moment for Slim and for the greater campaign in Syria.<sup>132</sup> From now on according to Miller, Slim followed what was to be a “blueprint for the remainder of his military career: a steadfast belief that, once he was satisfied his plans were correct, nothing must be allowed to erode them.”<sup>133</sup> Slim was now a fully realized grit paragon. He was soon tested.

---

<sup>130</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 144; and Slim, *Unofficial History*, 161-164.

<sup>131</sup> Slim, *Unofficial History*, 163-164.

<sup>132</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 148.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

## Section Four: Forging a Culture of Grit

This section examines Slim's role in both the defeat and victory of his commands while battling Japan in Burma and India from 1942-1945. This section demonstrates that Slim forged organizational grit by bringing forth *interest*, *practice*, *purpose*, and *hope* in his subordinates. Part 1 considers Slim's command of 1st Burma Corps (Burcorps) to show how a combination of Japanese grit and British unpreparedness undermined the *hope* of the allied forces. Part 2 examines Slim's rebuilding of the allied forces after the defeats of 1942 to demonstrate how he forged a culture of organizational grit. Part 3 surveys the allied offensive that drove the Japanese from Burma to show how the Fourteenth Army's organizational grittiness was a factor that led to its victory.

### Part One: Defeat in Burma

In March 1942, Slim relinquished command of 10th Indian Division, then in Iraq, and left for a new assignment in India. After reporting, Slim flew to Burma to assess the rapidly deteriorating situation brought on by the Japanese invasion, which launched in January.<sup>134</sup> A major reason for the crisis was the Allies lacked a clearly defined and unified goal hierarchy. Slim wrote, "In Burma our unpreparedness when the blow fell was extreme, and we paid for it."<sup>135</sup> However gallantly the troops fought, the dire situation worked to undermine their *hope*. The fall of Rangoon on 9 March, effectively cut off the army. It was only by "sheer luck" that the British forces extricated themselves. Later at Mandalay Slim recalled seeing broken-up formations, gunners without guns, and fragmented groups. Slim believed that "unless someone very quickly took hold pretty tightly, a rot might set in behind the front."<sup>136</sup> Slim passed his assessment to General Archibald Wavell, Commander-in-Chief, India, who ordered him to take command of Burcorps, a

---

<sup>134</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 157-158.

<sup>135</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 10.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-19.



newly formed headquarters. Burcorps consisted of two divisions, the 17th Indian and 1st Burma, which had already been fighting the Japanese directly under an Army headquarters.<sup>137</sup>

Slim immediately set to work; however, many grit sapping obstacles stood in his path. Slim was taken aback at his headquarters' lack of equipment and the inadequate state of his troop's uniforms. Slim's main concern was the Corps had no identified ultimate objective. Slim did not know if his force would defend Burma, assist in the retreat of forces into India, or counterattack. In the meantime, Slim ordered small-scale offensive operations. Compared to the Japanese, his soldiers lacked the necessary training and equipment to fight in Burma's dense jungles.<sup>138</sup>

The Japanese fought tenaciously – willing to overcome any adversity to achieve their goals. In contrast to the ill-defined allied goal hierarchy, the Japanese objective was clear. An unbroken string of victories powered Japanese *hope*. Jungle warfare *practice* gave them the confidence to move through terrain considered impenetrable by the British. The Japanese Bushido culture, evidenced by their disregard for their own lives and strict obedience to their superior's orders, fueled their *interest* and *purpose*. The Japanese exploited the British tendency to stay to the roads to facilitate mechanized transport. With astonishing speed, the Japanese established roadblocks to the rear of British forces to induce panic and paralysis. Unsurprisingly, the Japanese gained a reputation as being invincible, and allied *passion* plummeted.<sup>139</sup>

Slim was determined to regain the initiative, but the Japanese enjoyed overwhelming superiority. The Japanese outflanked British defensive positions at will, and only a fighting withdrawal to India could prevent a humiliating defeat. Slim stiffened the resolve of his subordinates by maintaining an air of confidence, and demonstrated his *hope* in the process. During

---

<sup>137</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 19-23; and Lyman, *Bill Slim*, 15.

<sup>138</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 164-166.

<sup>139</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 14-15; Lyman, *Slim, Master of War* (London: Constable and Robinson LTD, 2004), 58-59, 78; and Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 166-167.

the maelstrom that was Burma in March-April 1942, Captain James Lunt was reassured upon his first meeting with Slim.<sup>140</sup> He remembered, “Slim did not make promises...which, if they failed to materialise [sic], might damage morale...Slim just gave one confidence that everything that could be done to provide us with a fighting chance, would be done.”<sup>141</sup> Slim explained to the troops what was happening and why they were withdrawing. The effect of explaining his plans and their aim had a stirring effect on morale. Captain John Hedley recalled being elated after hearing Slim discuss how he intended to use tanks to defeat the Japanese.<sup>142</sup> “Thank God,” Hedly thought, “now we know what is expected of us.”<sup>143</sup> A battalion commander recalled that Slim habitually visited units at the front and that after talking with him, he “invariably returned full of confidence and pep.”<sup>144</sup> In the desperate fight to extricate a division trapped in the Yenangyuang oil fields, Slim put on a “cheerful expression” despite feeling “as depressed as a man could.”<sup>145</sup>

Despite these efforts, the situation deteriorated, and a general retirement across the Irrawaddy began 25 April.<sup>146</sup> Slim noted that the morale of the fighting men improved with the order as they now had a clear goal – “to get to India alive.”<sup>147</sup> Slim overcame setbacks in crisis after crisis. His calm demeanor and tenacity in the face of overwhelming adversity served as a social multiplier effect that inspired grit in others. Major Ian Grant recalled that Slim, in small informal sessions, admitted that doctrinal solutions were not working. Grant and the others were encouraged

---

<sup>140</sup> Robert Lyman, *Bill Slim*, 16; Russel Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 169; and James Lunt, *The Retreat From Burma* (New York: Sterling Publishing Co. Inc, 1986), 197-198.

<sup>141</sup> Lunt, *The Retreat From Burma*, 198.

<sup>142</sup> Russel Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 175; and John Hedley, *Jungle Fighter* in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 175.

<sup>143</sup> John Hedley, *Jungle Fighter* in Russel Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 175.

<sup>144</sup> Evans, *Slim as Military Commander*, 67.

<sup>145</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory* Slim, 68-69.

<sup>146</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 185.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

by this discussion as they “now had a leader who realized that new methods were required to counter Japanese tactics and was prepared to think them out.”<sup>148</sup> Without losing its cohesion, the Burcorps crossed the Chindwin into Manipur, India, in late May, completing an epic one thousand mile, fighting withdrawal in just one hundred days.<sup>149</sup>

## Part Two: Forging a Culture of Grit

In the period following the defeat, Slim never lost *hope*, and his *purpose* never faltered. Levering a lifetime of *practice*, Slim set about to design and execute a plan of action to address the organizational grittiness of his forces. Slim reflected on the events that had brought defeat, not to “find excuses for our failure,” but remedies to be used for next time.<sup>150</sup> The lists of errors that led to the defeat were long and varied. Fundamentally, a lack of preparation, poor jungle fighting capabilities, and the need for determination in the face of Japanese roadblock tactics were at the root of the failure.<sup>151</sup>

The Allies had been “outmaneuvered, outfought, and outgeneraled.”<sup>152</sup> The soldiers were terrified of the jungle and the Japanese. Still, Slim did not recognize the Japanese as an “invincible” foe, and saw nothing new in their outflanking tactics. Slim reasoned the best solution was to “do the same to the Japanese before they did it to us,” which proper training and intelligence gathering would make possible.<sup>153</sup> Slim showed them the way.

---

<sup>148</sup> Lyman, *Bill Slim*, 19-20; and Ian Lyall Grant and Kazuo Tamayama, *Burma, 1942: the Japanese Invasion - Both Sides Tell the Story of a Savage Jungle War* (Chichester, UK: Zampi Press, 1999), 231-232.

<sup>149</sup> Lyman, *Bill Slim*, 16-17.

<sup>150</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 115.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 115-120.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>153</sup> Hickey, *The Unforgettable Army*, 78; and Slim in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 208.

The foundation of the training program was a short memorandum Slim devised to overcome the setbacks that plagued the 1942 campaign. The program set high standards and norms, and explained the way things were done and why. It stressed that the individual soldier must gain an *interest* in jungle warfare by living, moving, and exercising in it. Once the soldier no longer considered the jungle his enemy, further *practice* enabled him to harness it for his concealment and surprise movements. On this foundation, jungle patrolling served as the “master key” to jungle warfare. Greater jungle maneuverability obviated the need for many frontal attacks, and facilitated less costly allied outflanking efforts. The program ordered the use of tanks with infantry support and never in piecemeal attacks. Mobile local reserves should maintain lines of communication. In support of that end, the memorandum stressed that there were no non-combatants; even traditional rear area troops were responsible for their security. All units were to retain *hope* even with Japanese in the rear, and to regard the Japanese, not themselves, as surrounded. Increased mobility, surprise, and offensive action were means to a mid-level goal to kill the Japanese.<sup>154</sup>

Slim executed a continuous and progressive training program. From cooks to clerks, privates to generals, Slim led daily foot marches in full kit that got longer and tougher. There were field craft classes and experimentation with armor in the jungle. At the unit level, Slim staged divisional exercises under trying conditions and elements lived in the jungle for weeks on end. A number of British officers went to the front, and soon networks of agents were feeding information to the intelligence section. According to Miller, “The message was constantly rammed home to the men that the jungle was their friend, not their enemy.”<sup>155</sup>

Slim’s training regimen went far toward forging organizational grit amongst the troops. He still needed to fire the *passion* of the army. Towards the end of 1943, Slim, now in command of the Fourteenth Army, formalized his ideas to raise the morale of the force. Deeply resonant of

---

<sup>154</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 142-143.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 146-147; and Russel Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 215.

Duckworth's concept of passion, Slim defined morale as the "intangible force which will move a whole group of men to give their last ounce to achieve something."<sup>156</sup> According to Slim, for morale to endure, it had to have a strong foundation built upon the spiritual, intellectual, and material factors. By "spiritual," Slim meant that there must be a noble and vital object. Importantly, a person must believe that their actions matter and contribute to the accomplishment of that objective.<sup>157</sup> Slim wrote, "We had the advantage over our enemies that ours was based on real, not false, spiritual values...We fought for the clean, the decent, the free things of life...We fought only because the powers of evil had attacked these things."<sup>158</sup> By "intellectual," Slim argued that a person must believe that the objective is attainable, as his organization is an efficient one. Finally, by "material," Slim meant that a person must feel he has a fair deal and the tools needed for the task. Slim supported enhanced welfare services, which increased the troops' access to live entertainment, palatable food, and news.<sup>159</sup> Even the most perseverant Soldier's passion ebbs away over time if they lack a top-level goal with a feasible supporting hierarchy.

Slim's challenge was to rebuild morale in Fourteenth Army. To do so, Slim relied on an approach he used his whole professional life – informal talks between the commander and men. During the 1942 retreat, Slim assessed that this communication kept the army together. Brigadier Tony Scott, Slim's former corps chief of staff, remembered that Slim was ready to speak to every man in his native tongue, and inspired all with his simplicity.<sup>160</sup> Nigel Bruce, a former assistant division commander, recalled Slim had "an ability to trust people and in so doing get the best out of

---

<sup>156</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 182.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 182-183; and Hickey, *The Unforgettable Army*, 190-196.

<sup>160</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 184; and Evans, op. cit in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 210

them.”<sup>161</sup> Slim created an “Information Room” to keep all ranks in touch with operational events.<sup>162</sup> Slim explained why shortages existed and the efforts underway to improve the situation. As commander of Fourteenth Army, he encouraged his subordinate commanders to increase the number of informal talks and contact between troops and themselves to reap greater benefits. Always willing to set an example, Slim spent a third of his time away from his headquarters talking to people.<sup>163</sup>

Slim’s actions forged a culture of grit within the army. His regimen cleared away the obstacles that sapped his troop’s *perseverance*. His emphasis on morale, analogous to *passion*, served as a compass that guided the rebuilding of his forces from 1943-1944. While the troops had once fought to save their lives, their top-level goal now became “to destroy the Japanese Army, to smash it as an evil thing.”<sup>164</sup> As a grit paragon, Slim recognized that a top-level goal required a host of supporting mid-level and low-level goals. His training regimen and spiritual, intellectual, and material improvement programs served as those goals and made victory possible.

### Part Three: Victory

By end of 1943, the Allies’ new focus paid dividends in Arakan after a disastrous first campaign there in 1942. Slim devised new tactics calling for surrounded rear area troops to create a 360-degree stronghold, well stocked via airdrop, called an “administrative box.” The box served as an “anvil” on which a relieving force, named the “hammer,” used to smash the Japanese. Anthony Brett-James, a young officer in Arakan recalled being impressed by Slim’s “penetrating criticism

---

<sup>161</sup> Slim 13/8, CAC in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 213.

<sup>162</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 141

<sup>163</sup> Lyman, *Slim, Master of War*, 144; and Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 184.

<sup>164</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 183-184.

and appreciation of the detailed tactics” during daily war games.<sup>165</sup> When the Japanese offensive came in February 1944, the well-trained and confident troops decisively defeated it.<sup>166</sup>

Slim approached combat the same way he approached training – progressively. In the Arakan campaign, British forces had a three-to-one superiority by design.<sup>167</sup> Slim recollected, “I had no intention, if I could avoid it, of pitting my army division for division against the Japanese...I hoped that the Arakan campaign would be the first step towards building up a tradition of success.”<sup>168</sup> On 3 February 1944, Lieutenant General Sakurai Tokutaro attacked the Arakan allied positions.<sup>169</sup> General Sakurai, a subordinate commander, reasoned, “As they [the Allies] have previously suffered defeat, should a portion of them waver, the whole of them will get confused and victory is certain.”<sup>170</sup> By 8 April, the Japanese surrounded one allied division, and Japanese media triumphantly published headlines proclaiming, “The British Are Trapped.”<sup>171</sup> The Japanese anticipated the Allies would do what they had always done, attempt to fight out and retreat. They were shocked to discover that the allied troops stood resolutely firm. Surrounded rear-elements formed an “administrative box,” and everyone, from cooks to clerks, fought off the Japanese. As the “box” held, another division maneuvered to smash the Japanese.<sup>172</sup>

By 13 February, the Japanese Arakan offense had failed. In his visits, Slim observed the changes to the troops’ grittiness wrought by his training and morale-building program. The men

---

<sup>165</sup> Lyman, *Bill Slim*, 24; Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 225-226; and Brett-James, *Report My Signals*, in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 226

<sup>166</sup> Lyman, *Bill Slim*, 24.

<sup>167</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 251-252.

<sup>168</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 226.

<sup>169</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 256.

<sup>170</sup> Genera Sakurai in Henry Maule, *Spearhead General: The Epic Story of General Sir Frank Messervy and his Men in Eritrea, North Africa and Burma* (London: Odhams Press Limited, 1961), 246-247.

<sup>171</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 257.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 258-260.

held confidence in themselves and the men fighting next to them. They were optimistic and no longer fearful of the jungle or the Japanese. In the past, when cut off, units culminated and some broke. Now allied formations sent out aggressive patrols to cut the Japanese lines of communication. As evidence, a pilot seeing artillery in the “box” under fire by a determined enemy near their position, radioed if they were OK.<sup>173</sup> The reply was, “Fine, but drop us a hundred bayonets.”<sup>174</sup> The enemy’s last desperate effort to destroy the “box” came on 25 March when a force of some four hundred Japanese infiltrated into the administrative zone. None survived. The second Arakan campaign marked the first victory for the Allies in Burma and a turning point. The battle validated Slim’s strategy and training program, and through these, smashed the legend of Japanese invincibility.<sup>175</sup>

In the campaign to defeat the Japanese from 1944 to 1945, the Fourteenth Army faced many obstacles, which they overcame with grit. Always looking for favorable conditions and progressive challenges, Slim determined it wise to let the Japanese main effort advance into an allied prepared defense. From March to July 1944, the Japanese attacked allied positions at Imphal and Kohima. During the fighting, 17th Division received a terrific onslaught. The division maintained its fighting capability and successfully maneuvered out of danger to Imphal. Punch Cowan, the division commander announced, “We are the better troops and every man in the division knows it,” after the ordeal.<sup>176</sup> Cowan’s words reflected the new confidence and *passion* that pervaded the army.

On 15 April, during the lifting of a Japanese siege on Kohima, Major David Wilson, a member of the relieving column, seeing the gritty defenders, recalled, “They looked like aged,

---

<sup>173</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 260.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 263-265,

<sup>176</sup> Lyman, *Bill Slim*, 26-29; Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 294; and Punch Cowan in *SEAC*, August 1944 in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 294.



blood stained scarecrows, dropping with fatigue; the only clean thing about them was their weapons.”<sup>177</sup> He noted, “Bill Slim seemed to know everyone in the army.”<sup>178</sup> After personally repositioning a battery to hit a Japanese force, Wilson recalled that Slim turned to him and discussed how “our position in the air, which made air supply possible: that in its turn had made us less dependent on the road, so that we could now get behind the Japanese and cut them off.”<sup>179</sup> Even in battle, Slim communicated core values.

Fanatical Japanese troops attacked the allied defenses long after the situation was militarily hopeless. In a display of dumb grit, a Japanese divisional commander informed his men he expected them to be annihilated, which they were, in suicidal attacks that left the dead in such concentrated numbers that bulldozers were used to bury them. Slim doubted the military wisdom of the assault, but admired the courage and hardiness of the Japanese soldier. In summing up the battle, the *SEAC* newspaper reported, “The Jap assaults crashed like waves in a heavy sea against the fortress walls of Imphal, but it was the waves that broke.”<sup>180</sup>

After the rout of the Japanese at Imphal and Kohima, the Fourteenth Army executed a dogged pursuit to clear India. Fighting not just the enemy, but also disease and exhaustion, the allied forces demonstrated incredible operational reach. Slim snatched time to visit the front line troops to congratulate them, but also to spur them on. As weary as they were, “The troops responded magnificently.”<sup>181</sup>

---

<sup>177</sup> David Wilson, *The Sum of Things*, in Russel Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 298.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 239, 301-302. *SEAC* was a war theatre newspaper; Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 336-337; and *SEAC* in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 301.

<sup>181</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 348.

Slim noted, “It was campaigning at its hardest, but everyone was cheerful.”<sup>182</sup> As evidence of the Fourteenth Army’s gritty culture, one rifleman of the Gurkhas, despite multiple wounds, destroyed two enemy tanks after dragging himself to within thirty yards of them. When asked why he had moved so dangerously close to the enemy, he replied, “Well, sir I’d been trained not to fire the Piat until I was certain of hitting and I knew I could hit them at 30 yards so I went 30 yards.”<sup>183</sup> On another occasion, Slim emphasized *purpose* during a pep talk: “Officers are there to lead. I tell you, therefore, as officers, that you will neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, nor smoke, nor even sit down until you have personally seen that your men have done these things. If you will do this for them, they will follow you to the end of the world. And if you do not, I will break you.”<sup>184</sup> By the end of 1944, the Fourteenth Army had cleared India and killed forty thousand enemy. Slim remembered, “I had asked for the impossible – and got it.”<sup>185</sup>

After bitter fighting, Lieutenant General Mutaguchi of the Japanese Fifteenth Army, grudgingly accepted defeat and ordered a withdrawal from India on 8 July.<sup>186</sup> By September 1944, Slim gained approval to reconquer Burma.<sup>187</sup> In what was later hailed as a masterstroke, the Fourteenth Army executed Operation Extended Capital.<sup>188</sup> As before, the Army overcame immense challenges to accomplish their top-level goal. To supply the army along hundreds of miles, learned optimism and adaption was necessary. In an exchange with his chief engineer, William Hasted, Slim said, “Billy, there’s the river [the Chindwin] and there are the tress. In two months I want 500

---

<sup>182</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 350.

<sup>183</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 314-315. The piat is an anti-tank weapon.

<sup>184</sup> Attributed to Frank Own quoting Slim, writing for the *Phoenix*, in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 314-315.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 328; and Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 348.

<sup>186</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 308.

<sup>187</sup> Lyman, *Bill Slim*, 37.

<sup>188</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 334.

tons of supplies a day down that river.”<sup>189</sup> Reflecting a culture of grit and *hope*, Hasted replied, “The difficult we do at once, the impossible will take a little longer and for miracles we need a month’s notice.”<sup>190</sup> Before long, rafts constructed from logs, dragged from the forest by elephants, were floating supplies downriver.<sup>191</sup>

Such *perseverance* and *passion* enabled extraordinary operational reach during the reconquest of Burma. The 19th Division cut its way two hundred miles through the jungle in just twenty days.<sup>192</sup> During an aerial reconnaissance, Slim could see “through gaps in the treetops...on every rough track files of men marching hard with a *purposefulness* [emphasis added] that could be recognized from five hundred feet.”<sup>193</sup> Prior to the battle of Meiktila, Private George MacDonald Fraser believed the “biggest boost to morale was the burly man who came to talk to the assembled battalion...I’m not sure when, but it was unforgettable. Slim was like that...[Slim] talked about how we had caught Jap off-balance and were going to annihilate him in the open; there was no ringing clichés...[it was] the sheer certainty that was built into every line of him, that gave Fourteenth Army its overwhelming confidence; what he promised, that he would surely do.”<sup>194</sup> According to Slim, Meiktila sealed the Japanese fate in Burma.<sup>195</sup> In the ensuing drive to Rangoon, Slim stepped into a gun pit firing into a Japanese position. Slim apologized to the man for having to cut food rations, a move he felt necessary to ensure adequate fuel and ammunition reached the front.<sup>196</sup> The soldier replied, “Don’t you worry about that, sir’. Put us on quarter rations, but give us

---

<sup>189</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 398-399.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 400-401.

<sup>193</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 401.

<sup>194</sup> George MacDonald Fraser, *Quartered Safe Out Here: A Harrowing Tale of World War II* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2007), 35-37.

<sup>195</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 452.

<sup>196</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 353.

the ammo and we'll get you to Rangoon.”<sup>197</sup> It was a comment that epitomized the grit of the army.<sup>198</sup>

In May 1945, the Allies captured Rangoon, an accomplishment that marked the end of the campaign for Burma. The gritty Fourteenth Army had travelled nearly one thousand miles in rugged country making due with equipment that was always in desperate short supply. In that time, the troops annihilated five enemy divisions – the worst defeat that the Japanese Imperial Army had ever suffered.<sup>199</sup> It was the special mixture of *perseverance* and *passion* that made victory possible.

---

<sup>197</sup> Slim, “Courage and Other Broadcasts,” in Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 353-354.

<sup>198</sup> Miller, *Uncle Bill*, 353.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 338-355.

## Section Five: Conclusion

Lieutenant-General Slim was faced with a series of situations many of great gravity. He faced all these with calm courage and determination. As the situation developed he saw clearly that the Japanese Forces had reached a position which would give him the opportunity to defeat them...and he said from the beginning of the operations that he would do so decisively. He made plans to this end and allowed nothing to divert them.

— Gen. Slim Knighthood Citation, *Uncle Bill*

This section summarizes the case study findings and discusses grit's relevance to the contemporary Army. Part 1 reemphasizes that Slim's personal attributes are highly correlated with those of the grit paragon, and that the Fourteenth Army's organizational grittiness was a factor that led to its victory over the Japanese. Part 2 discusses the grit's construct relation to today's contemporary environment and how to grow grit.

### Part One: Grit, Slim, and the Fourteenth Army

An examination of Slim's early life supports that he fostered the four psychological assets of the grit paragon. Slim's *interest* in soldiering followed the pattern outlined by Duckworth. Slim became interested in military affairs over time. Repeated exposure, originally expressed in play, fostered his *interest*. As his *interest* grew, he took more proactive steps to foster it and undertook what Ericsson et al. labeled deliberate practice. Childhood daydreaming became dedicated study. He developed a greater sense of *purpose* after his commissioning. As Duckworth observed about most gritty people, Slim was dramatically motivated to seek a meaningful and other-oriented existence: he cut short his schooling to support his family financially; he held concern for his poor students; and he had empathy for the working class. Slim's later service to the common soldier can be traced, according to Lewin, back to that "crude classroom in a Birmingham slum, where victory consisted in ending the day without disorder."<sup>200</sup>

---

<sup>200</sup> Lewin, *Slim*, 9.

Slim's effort, not any special talent, prepared him for World War I, and he never lost *hope*. Despite great obstacles to becoming an officer, Slim's efforts kept a military career a possibility. As an officer, Slim shared the hardships of his subordinates. He critically questioned tactics that put men at unnecessary risk. So great was his desire to be in service to troops, Slim flaunted regulations to rejoin them in Mesopotamia after his grievous chest wound. Slim took failures in stride, and in doing so, demonstrated that he possessed Seligman's learned optimism. Slim's *interest* and *hope* ignited his passion for soldiering, his *practice* and *purpose* fueled his perseverance.

Slim's *practice* during the interwar period and his first experiences in World War II transformed him from a gritty novice into a mature grit paragon. A steady accretion of skill was possible because Slim maintained consistency over time in pursuit of being a "good officer." Slim sought stretch experiences. Once he set a goal, he took the necessary steps to make it a reality. Slim recognized time and energy is finite and avoided distracting activities. He loved what he did and was not in constant search of novelty. At the start of World War II, Slim adhered to his *purpose*, making it a top priority to safeguard the lives of his men by limiting frontal attacks. When the attack on Gallabat resulted in failure, Slim refused to lose *hope* and took valuable lessons from the experience.

Slim forged a culture of grit in his organizations. After the defeat of 1st Burma Corps, Slim examined the failure to glean lessons. The loss demonstrated how the lack of a unified goal hierarchy undermines organizational grit. His *hope* afforded him the belief that the Japanese were not invincible, and that greater organizational effort directed towards a unified top-level goal would bring victory. In pursuit of that goal, Slim published his jungle warfare memorandum, and instituted a progressive training and morale-building program which adapted his forces to the enemy and the environment. These efforts ignited the *interest* of the men in jungle warfare while simultaneously enacting deliberate *practice* in new tactics.

Slim's efforts resonate with the Army's Mission Command philosophy. Slim unified his diverse command under a common goal – to smash the Japanese Army. His clear guidance was comparable to the commander's intent concept as it informed the troops how to best accomplish the mission in the jungle. The program incorporated core gritty values and prioritized the developmental model over the attrition model. Slim ensured his officers led by example, and that training, and later combat, presented progressive challenges to cultivate the *passion* of the troops and build trust. Throughout, Slim and his subordinate commanders communicated his values during frequent contacts with the troops. Slim's efforts swept away the fear and material concerns that served as obstacles and established an accomplishable goal hierarchy.

The Fourteenth Army's organizational grittiness was a factor that led to its victory over the Japanese. The Army's grittiness enhanced its operational reach and dispelled the myth of Japanese invincibility. The grittier troops did not lose *hope* or culminate, as evidenced by their cohesion even when surrounded in administrative boxes. Slim and his commanders served as *purposeful* role models that drove the troops forward during the pursuit of the Japanese. The men, united in a common goal, overcame extraordinary hardship to defeat the enemy. The troops' passion and perseverance turned defeat into victory.

## Part Two: Slim – A Contemporary Grit Role Model

The grit construct is not a leadership model; rather it is a useful addendum to the existing Army doctrine. Grittiness is about achieving goals, about winning, not necessarily about leading. The grit construct's key strength is that it clearly explains, using only a handful of attributes, why some succeed and why others do not. In a “complex world,”<sup>201</sup> grittier soldiers are better suited to cope with, learn from, and overcome the challenges inherent to the nature of war. It is a factor that affects operational reach. Nor is grit, as the Japanese tenacity demonstrated, limited to just allies.

---

<sup>201</sup> United States Army, TP 525-3-1, i-iii.

The grit construct can shed light on why enemies in the current environment, passionately driven by an ideological top-level goal, can persevere in the face of technologically superior forces engaging in limited war. In these situations, commanders must address the grit differential that can develop in protracted conflicts.

Fortunately, Duckworth's construct provides ways to grow grit. In an era of fiscal austerity, growing grit offers a great return on operational reach. No new equipment or costly training is necessary. To grow grit, the first step is to test yourself. As a grit paragon, you are the role model for others. The second step is to develop a grit mindset by finding your own *interests*, carrying out deliberate *practice*, seeking a *purpose* that is other-oriented, and, throughout it all, practice gritty *hope*. Importantly, learn from *purposeful* grit role models like Slim and read the growing grit literature that is available. Next, test your people to determine your organizational level of grit. Finally, set out, as Slim did, to forge a culture of grit by leveraging culture, communicating, progressive development, using failure as a tool, and by nesting goals via training calendars devoid of superfluous requirements.<sup>202</sup>

The unique combination of *passion* and *perseverance* is what forms grit. It is an attribute that anyone can possess and grow, given time and the example of a purposeful role model. Slim's never-ending quest to achieve his goal of being a "good officer" continues to encourage today. His works communicate the core values so unforgettably demonstrated by the troops of the Fourteenth Army. Field Marshal Slim enhanced the grit in others, which by example has inspired another generation, and so on without end.

---

<sup>202</sup> Angela Duckworth's grit scale-scale can be accessed at <http://angeladuckworth.com/grit-scale/>. Angela Duckworth, and the authors listed in the bibliography, offer more and specific ideas on how to grow individual and organizational grit. Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 3-268.



## Appendix 1

Clearly defined and unified goal hierarchies are a key aspect of the grit construct.<sup>203</sup>

Figure 1 demonstrates an ideal goal hierarchy with one top-level goal with a host of supporting mid-level and low-level goals. Gritty people recognize that time and energy is finite, and competing goals distract you from the goals that matter.<sup>204</sup> Figure 2 shows three common grit destroying goal hierarchies. The first grit destroying hierarchy is the result of not having a plan to achieve a top-level goal. The second is a hierarchy that suffers from a dilution of effort. This hierarchy has many mid-level goals, but no overarching one. The third occurs when an individual has many competing top-level goals. Crucially, gritty people adapt to overcome setbacks. Figure 3 depicts the development of new lower and mid-level goals in response to a setback.<sup>205</sup>

---

<sup>203</sup> United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 13.

<sup>204</sup> Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 64-67.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 64-65; and United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 13-14.

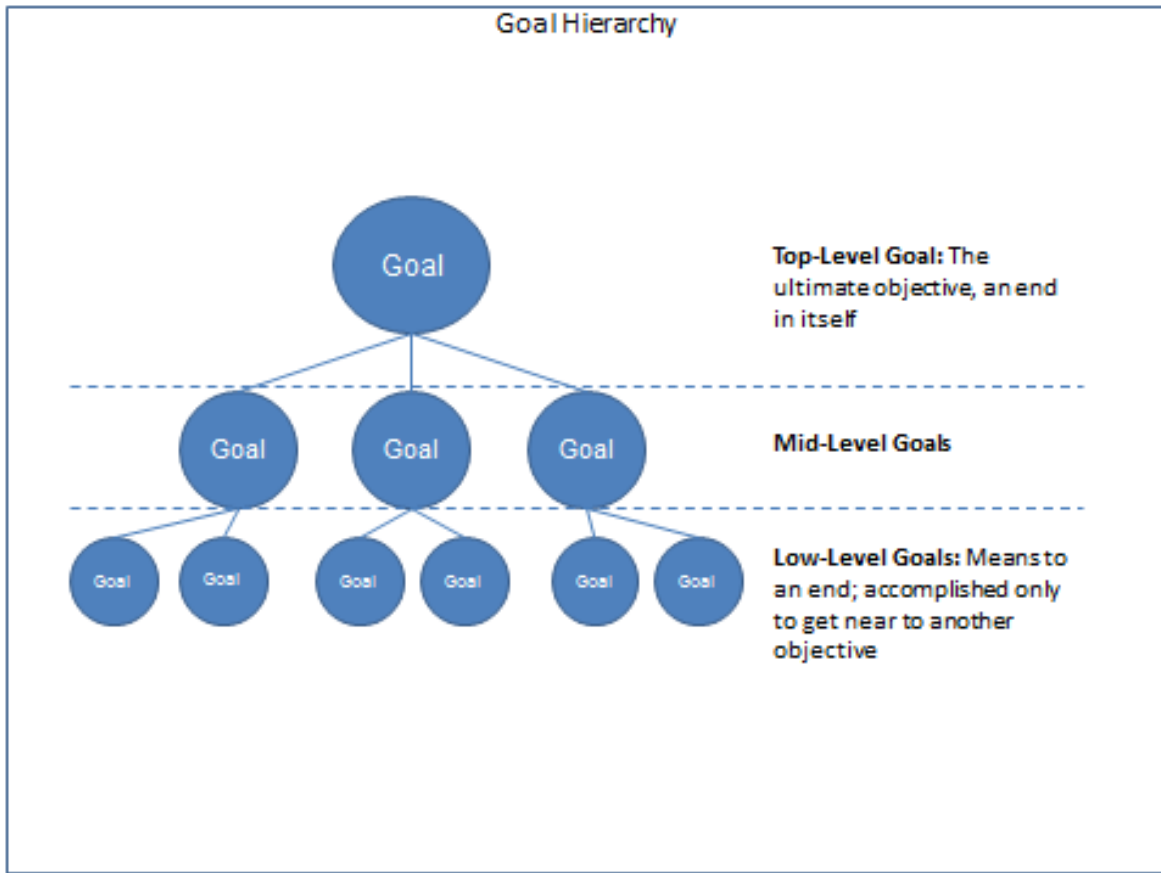


Figure 1. Goal Hierarchy

*Source:* Created by author; figure adapted from Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 64-67; and United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 13-14.

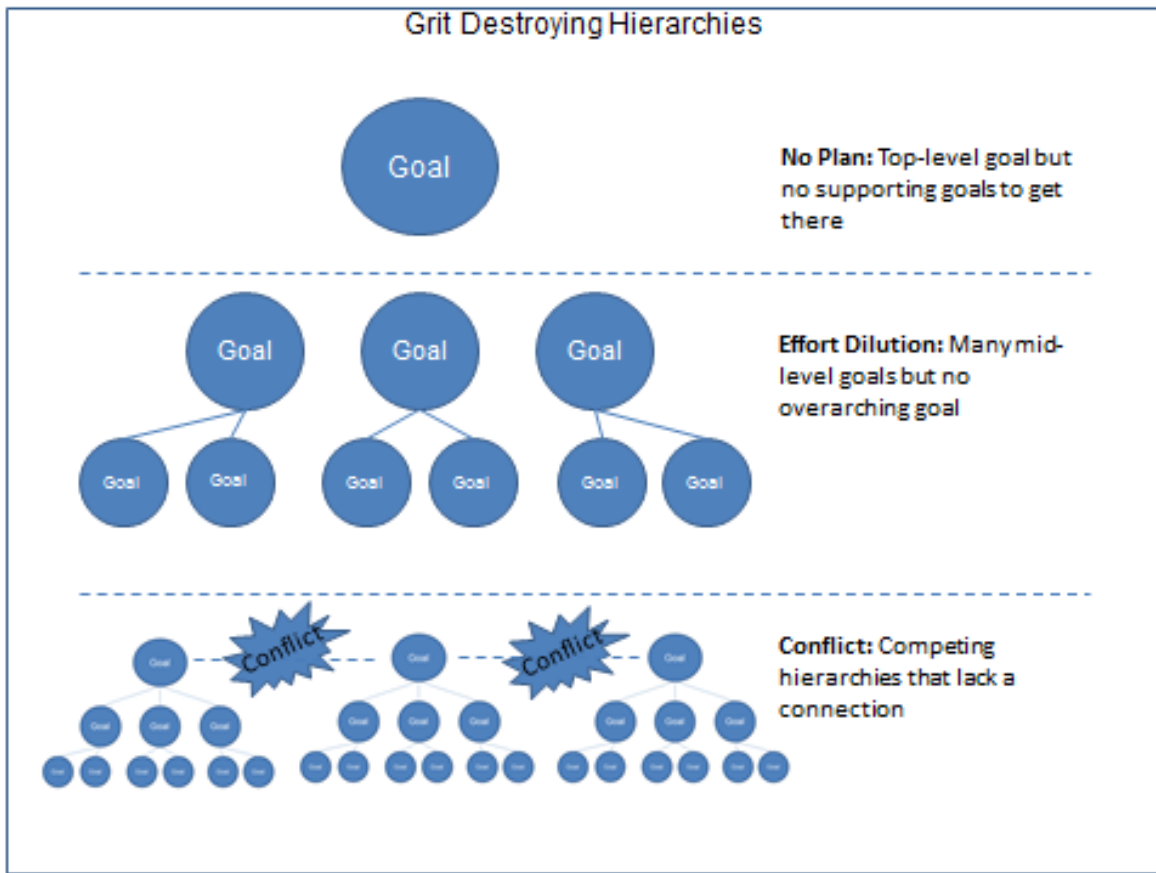


Figure 2. Grit Destroying Goal Hierarchies

Source: Created by author; figure adapted from Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 64-67; and United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 13-14.

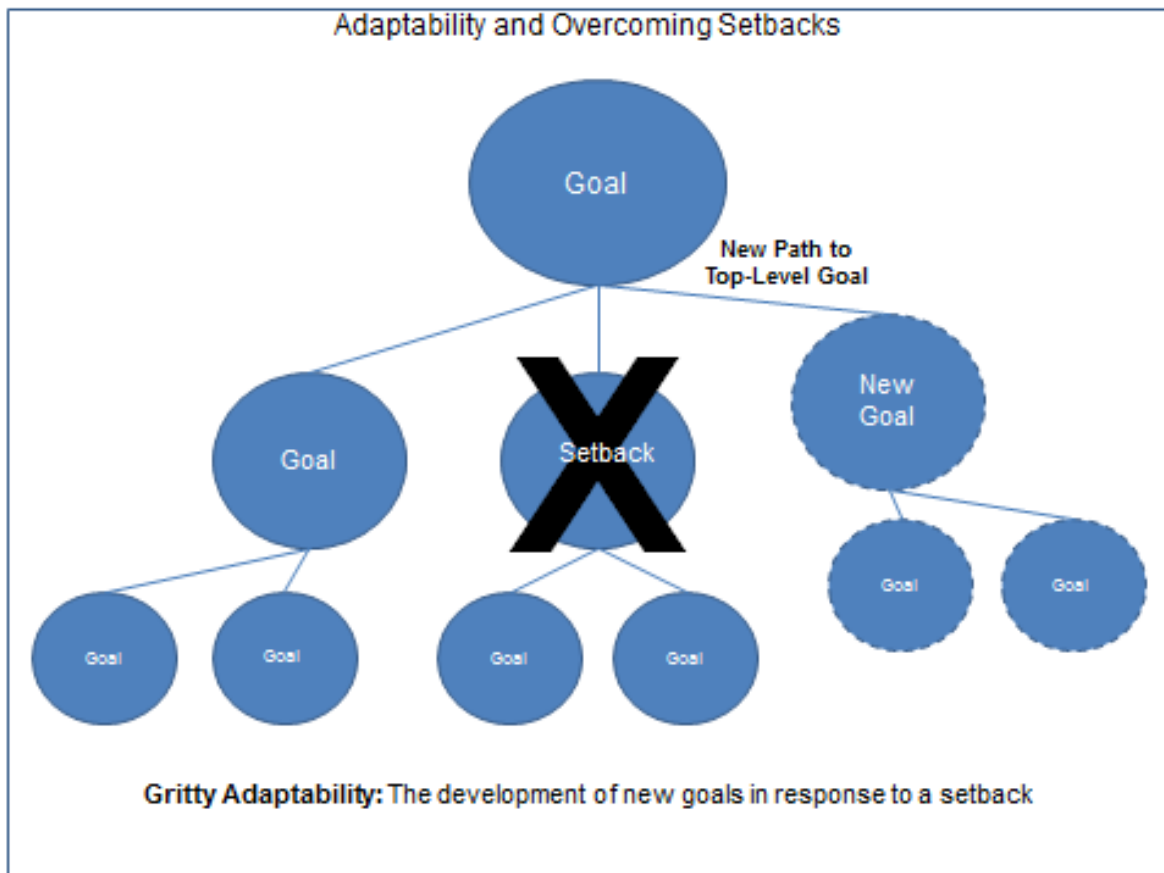


Figure 3. Adaptability and Overcoming Setbacks

Source: Created by author; figure adapted from Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 64-67; and United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 13-14.

## Appendix 2

Duckworth's Grit Scale is a tool used to assess an individual's grittiness. A respondent determines their grittiness using the scale by checking off one of five boxes per the ten following statements linked to responses ranging from "not at all like me" to "very much like me."<sup>206</sup>

Table 3. The Grit Scale	
#	Statement
1	"New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones."
2	"Setbacks don't discourage me. I don't give up easily."
3	"I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one."
4	"I am a hard worker."
5	"I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete."
6	"I finish whatever I begin."
7	"My interests change from year to year."
8	"I am diligent. I never give up."
9	"I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest."
10	"I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge." <sup>207</sup>

Source: Created by author; table adapted from and quoted from Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 55.

---

<sup>206</sup> United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 9-10; and Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 54-57.

<sup>207</sup> Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 55.

## Appendix 3

Doctrine does not explicitly discuss the concept of grit. The grit construct encompasses many Army leadership attributes, but no attribute captures grit in total. A way to think of grit is as it being an emergent property of a combination of essential attributes. Table 1 contrasts the definitions of grit related qualities and attributes from ADRP 6-22, *Army Leadership*, and FM 6-22, *Leader Development*. As seen below, the grit construct is a useful addition to, but not a replacement for the existing leadership doctrine. Grittiness is about achieving goals, not necessarily about leading. The grit construct's key strength is that it clearly explains, using only a handful of attributes, why some succeed and why others do not.

Table 4. Grit In Comparison to Army Leadership Attributes		
Attribute	Definition	Contrast
Grit	The “combination of passion and perseverance,” which is the key to exceptional achievement in some goal. <sup>208</sup>	
Perseverance	The quality that allows someone to overcome setbacks, complete a tough challenge, and to finish what they start. <sup>209</sup>	
Passion	“Sustained, enduring devotion” to achieving one’s goals. <sup>210</sup>	
Discipline	“The ability to control one’s own behavior.” <sup>211</sup>	Gritty individuals must display a high degree of discipline; otherwise, they would be unable to progress towards a goal. Discipline demands controlling negative behavior in the moment, whereas Grit is aligning one’s behaviors and passion over a long period toward the accomplishment of a specific objective. <sup>212</sup>
Resilience	“Showing a tendency to recover quickly from setbacks, shock, injuries, adversity, and stress while maintaining a mission and organizational focus.” <sup>213</sup>	Gritty people are resilient in that they are able to recover from adverse situations. <sup>214</sup> Gritty individuals grow stronger from adversity and are propelled forward. <sup>215</sup> One can therefore be resilient but not necessarily gritty. <sup>216</sup>
Prepares Self	“To prepare for increasingly more demanding operational environments, Army leaders must invest more time on self-	Gritty people go through great lengths to prepare themselves. The grit construct takes into account growth versus fixed mindset to explain why some people are more likely to prepare themselves than others. <sup>218</sup>

<sup>208</sup> Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 8.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>211</sup> United States Army, AD RP 6-22, *Army Leadership* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012) 3-5.

<sup>212</sup> United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 8.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 4-2.

<sup>214</sup> United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 8.

<sup>215</sup> Stoltz, *Grit: The New Science of What it takes to Persevere, Flourish, Succeed*, 26.

<sup>216</sup> United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 8.

<sup>218</sup> Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 117-142.

Table 4. Grit In Comparison to Army Leadership Attributes		
	study and self-development than before.” <sup>217</sup>	
Develops Others	A “consideration for organizational leaders is how and what individuals need to learn.” <sup>219</sup>	Grit paragons understand that learning is inseparable from interests, purpose, and passion. The grit construct informs one in the development of others.
Expertise	“The special knowledge and skill developed from experience, training, and education.” <sup>220</sup>	The grit construct explains how expertise is gained via a process of systematic and deliberate practice, which is itself sustained by passion. <sup>221</sup> It offers an explanation as to why many people fall short of military expertise despite having opportunities for experience, training, and education.
Gets Results	“Getting results focuses on structuring what to do to produce consistent results.” <sup>222</sup>	Structure alone will not necessarily produce consistent results. The best plans will fail if the people conducting them lack the passion to carry it out. Grit emphasizes both.
Leads by Example	“Leaders operate on instinct that has evolved on what they have seen.” <sup>223</sup>	The grit construct incorporates leading by example as one of the primary means in which an individual influences their organization’s grittiness. <sup>224</sup>
Personal Courage	“It is the ability to put fear aside to do what is necessary.” <sup>225</sup>	When seeking an end, Gritty people must often face setbacks. Courage is “what triggers bravery” that allows an individual to continue despite possible negative consequences. <sup>226</sup> Perseverance and courage are therefore linked, but courageous people are not necessarily gritty if they are not directed in pursuit of a top-level goal.
Morale	-“The Army’s most important intangible human element. It is a measure of how people feel about themselves, their team, and their leaders.” -“High morale results in a cohesive team striving to achieve common goals.”	Organizational passion strongly resonates with the idea of morale. Whereas morale is about how people feel and the striving towards common goals, grit also emphasizes the enduring long-term nature of passion as a result of a sense of purpose and hope. Gritty individuals also believe that control of a difficult

<sup>217</sup> United States Army, Field Manual (FM) 6-22, *Leader Development* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015), 7-6.

<sup>219</sup> United States Army, FM 6-22, 10-5.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 5-3.

<sup>221</sup> Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 117-142.

<sup>222</sup> United States Army, FM 6-22, 8-1.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 6-10.

<sup>224</sup> Caldwell and Thompson, *Forging Grit*, 133-135; and Caslen, in Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 259-260.

<sup>225</sup> United States Army, FM 6-22, 3-3.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.



Table 4. Grit In Comparison to Army Leadership Attributes		
	<p>-“Leaders can boost morale in the face of extreme danger by providing their Soldiers the means and support for successful operations.”</p> <p>-“Units with high morale are usually more effective...and respond to hardships and losses better.”<sup>227</sup></p>	situation is possible as a result of a high state of readiness. <sup>228</sup>
Adaptability	<p>“The ability to identify the essential elements critical for performance in each new situation.”</p> <p>“The ability to change practices or the unit by quickly capitalizing on strengths and minimizing weaknesses.”<sup>229</sup></p>	“Grit, by necessity must include a degree of adaptability. Otherwise Grit can become stubbornness, highlighted by a lack of progress, rather than new ways to progress towards a goal.” <sup>230</sup>

Source: Created by author; table adapted from Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* (New York: Scribner, 2016), 8-9, 58, 117-142, 169-195; Lieutenant General Robert Caslen, in Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 259-260; United States Army, ADRP 6-22, 3-3, 3-5, 5-3, 6-5, 6-10, 8-1, 9-5, 10-5; United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 7-8; United States Army, FM 6-22, 4-2, 7-6; Stoltz, *Grit: The New Science of What It Takes to Persevere, Flourish, Succeed*, 26; and Stephen Caldwell and Mike Thompson, *Forging Grit*, 133-135.

---

<sup>227</sup> United States Army, FM 6-22, 6-5.

<sup>228</sup> Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, 169-195.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 9-5.

<sup>230</sup> United States Army, Mission Command Center of Excellence, *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*, 7-8.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

Dickens, William T., and James R. Flynn. "Heritability Estimates Versus Large Environmental Effects: The IQ Paradox Resolved." *Psychological Review* 108, no. 2 (1 April 2001): 346-69. Accessed January 19, 2017. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/heritability-estimates-versus-large-environmental-effects-the-iq-paradox-resolved/>.

Duckworth, Angela, and Patrick D. Quinn "Development and Validation of the Short Grit Scale (Grit-S)." *Journal of Personality Assessment* 91, no. 2 (2009): 166-174.

Duckworth, Angela, Christopher Peterson, Michael D. Mathews, and Dennis R. Kelly. "Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long Term Goals." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 96, no. 2 (June 2007): 1087-1. Accessed January 18, 2017. <https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckworth/images/Grit%20JPSP.pdf>.

Duckworth, Angela. *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*. New York: Scribner, 2016.

Ericsson, K. Anders, Ralf T. Krampe, and Clemens Tesch-Römer. "The Role of Deliberate Practice in the Acquisition of Expert Performance." *Psychological Review* 100, no. 3 (1993): 363-406. Accessed January 17, 2017. <http://projects.ict.usc.edu/itw/gel/EricssonDeliberatePracticePR93.pdf>.

Fraser, George MacDonald. *Quartered Safe Out Here: A Harrowing Tale of World War II*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2007.

Grant, Ian Lyall, and Kazuo Tamayama. *Burma, 1942: the Japanese Invasion - Both Sides Tell the Story of a Savage Jungle War*. Chichester, UK: Zampi Press, 1999.

Lunt, James. *The Retreat from Burma: 1941-1942*. New York: Sterling Publishing Co. Inc., 1986.

Masters, John. *The Road Past Mandalay*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961.

Slim, William. *Defeat into Victory: Battling Japan in Burma and India, 1942-1945*. New York: First Cooper Square Press, 2000.

———. *Unofficial History*. New York: David McKay, 1959.

### Secondary Sources

Barker, A. J. "British Bulldog." In *Slim*, edited by Michael Calvert and Barrie Pitt. New York: Ballantine Books, 1973.

Thompson, Mike, and Stephen Caldwell. *Forging Grit: A Story of Leadership Perseverance*. Boise, ID: Elevate Publishing, 2016.

Calvert, Michael. *Slim*. New York: Ballantine Books, Inc., 1973.

Chandler, David G. *The Campaigns of Napoleon*. New York: Scribner, 1966.

- Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War*. Edited and translated by Peter Paret and Michael Howard. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976.
- Evans, Geoffrey. *Slim as Military Commander*. New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc, 1969.
- Gladwell, Malcolm. *Outliers: The Story of Success*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2008.
- Hickey, Michael. *The Unforgettable Army: Slim's XIVth Army in Burma*. Staplehurst, UK: Spellmount LTD, 1992.
- Lewin, Ronald. *Slim: The Standardbearer*. Ware, UK: Wordsworth Editions, 1999.
- Lyman, Robert. *Bill Slim*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2011.
- . *Slim, Master of War*. London: Constable and Robinson Ltd, 2004.
- Matthews, Michael. *Head Strong: How Psychology is Revolutionizing War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Maule, Henry. *Spearhead General: The Epic Story of General Sir Frank Messervy and His Men in Eritrea, North Africa and Burma*. Reading, UK: Cox and Wyman Ltd. London: Fakenham and Reading, 1961. London: Odhams Press Limited,
- Miller, Russell. *Uncle Bill: The Authorised Biography of Field Marshal Viscount Slim*. Essex: Phoenix Publishing, 2014.
- Mission Command Center of Excellence. *Grit: A Look at Individual and Organizational Passion and Perseverance*. Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Mission Command Center of Excellence, 2015. Accessed January 28, 2017.  
[http://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/publications/HDCDTF\\_WhitePaper\\_%20Grit\\_FINAL\\_June\\_2015.pdf](http://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/publications/HDCDTF_WhitePaper_%20Grit_FINAL_June_2015.pdf).
- National Army Museum. "Britain's Greatest General." Accessed January 28, 2017.  
<http://www.nam.ac.uk/exhibitions/online-exhibitions/britains-greatest-general/how-vote>.
- Oettingen, Gabrielle G. "Positive Fantasy and Motivation." In *The Psychology of Action: Linking Cognition and Motivation to Behavior*, edited by P. M. Gollwitzer and J. A. Bargh, 236-59. New York: Guilford, 1996. Accessed September 2, 2016.  
[http://psych.nyu.edu/oettingen/Oettingen,%20G.%20\(1996\).%20Positive%20fantasy%20and%20motivation.pdf](http://psych.nyu.edu/oettingen/Oettingen,%20G.%20(1996).%20Positive%20fantasy%20and%20motivation.pdf).
- Stoltz, Paul. *Grit: The New Science of What It Takes to Persevere, Flourish, Succeed*. N.p.: 2014.

#### Doctrine

- US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet (TP) 525-3-1. *The U.S. Army Operating Concept (AOC): Win in a Complex World*. Fort Eustis, VA: Department of the Army, 2014.
- . Army Doctrine and Training Publication (ADRP) 3-0. *Unified Land Operations*. Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2012.

- . Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-0. *Mission Command*. Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2012.
- . Army Doctrine and Training Publication (ADRP) 6-22. *Army Leadership*. Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2012.
- . Field Manual (FM) 6-22, *Leader Development*. Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2015.